

Project Runway

Designer Clothes For Disciples



Written By
©Pastor Marty Baker
May 17, 2015

I don't think there is one TV show I watch consistently other than *FOX News*, and, maybe, *Storage Wars*. I pay for hundreds of channels, but really only tap into one of them. Can you relate? I like watching, but I usually am either too busy or just have other things to do which interest me.

My wife, Liz, who also likes to read, likes watching *Project Runway* too. I “watch” it while reading a book, surfing the net, or playing Scrabble on my iPad, and I've found it to most intriguing, especially from a spiritual perspective. The premise of the show is tailor-made (sorry for the cheesy pun) for theological purposes. How so? Each episode presents us with an ever dwindling array of would-be fashion designers who are seeking to create a fashion piece which is fundamentally better than their opponents. Some quickly constructed garments are beautiful and worth wearing, while others are, well, inferior and not worth a K-Mart blue light special. Those unfortunate folks who make the latter type of clothes are eventually voted off the fashion design team. The goal, of course, is to be the last man standing at the end of the series.

All of this easily leads us to a spiritual metaphor regarding the spiritual clothing which we should wear, and that clothing we should cast aside, quickly, in order to move on toward maturity. Paul develops this motif in several of his letters written to Christ-followers. Speaking to believers in Ephesus about how to grow in holiness, the wise, fashion minded apostle states:

“... and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Ephesians 4:24).

This concept is so important he employs it again when writing to the believers in the Colossian church:

“ ... and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image on the One who created him” (Colossians 3:10).

Based on these statements, I think it is safe to say Paul would have loved *Project Runway*. He could have easily used it to speak about the importance of putting off the wrong clothing called sin, while putting on the new clothing called holiness.

Tapping into Paul’s wording, then, and wedding it to a known cultural commodity like this particular reality show, I think we have the makings of a new series subtitled: *Designer Clothes For Disciples*. Where will we find our episodes challenging us to put off and put on spiritual clothes worthy of the Christ and the Christian walk? Believe it or not, I think the period of the Kings, presented in the Old Testament books of 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles, give us our share of clothes these kings either should have taken off or put on before the holy God they were supposed to serve. I’m sure we’ll all be able to relate as we study their lives, and my prayer is we will all be challenged to truly lay aside clothing not becoming of a disciple, while adorning ourselves with clothes which will bring Him praise and glory.

Our first episode is a clip from the life of King Saul, Israel’s first and infamous king. From a study of his roller-coaster spiritual life, we are presented with one significant spiritual fashion question:

Are You Wearing A Coat Called Half-Hearted Obedience? (1 Samuel 15)

After the period of the Judges (1390-1051 B.C.), Israel clamored for a king like the nations. They got one in Saul. Physically, he stood head and shoulders above everyone else. Militarily, he had great skill on the battlefield. Spiritually, however, he had a track record of following his will and not God’s. Tuning into our first episode in 1 Samuel 15, I’d counsel you to remember this particular reality show merely culminates Saul’s selfish, sinful desire to wear carnal clothes as opposed to sporting righteous, God-honoring clothes. Watch him carefully, for you just might discover there is much about Saul in you. Learn from his sinful clothing choices so you might dress appropriately as a disciple of Jesus.

I think the best way to get into this lengthy episode is to divide it up into its chronological five scenes. We will, therefore, work our way through each scene, pausing at the end of each one to offer much needed spiritual fashion advice.

Scene 1 (1 Samuel 15:1-3): The Edict

The historically based show opens with a direct command from God, by means of the aged prophet Samuel, to finally deal with one of Israel’s most ruthless foes, the Amalekites:

¹ Then Samuel said to Saul, “The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. ² “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set

himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. ³ ‘Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”

The command, which originated with God, informed King Saul that the time of grace had ended for the wicked, blood-thirsty Amalekites, and God had chosen him as the executor of His holy justice and judgment. All God desired from Saul was unfettered, unequivocal obedience.

Who were the Amalekites? They were descendants of Esau, the unbelieving brother of Jacob (Genesis 36:12-16; Hebrews 12:14-17), and they were the first enemy of Israel as they headed to the Promised Land after their freedom from Egyptian bondage. As the weary and weak Israelites came to Rephidim, just east of the Red Sea in the desert near Mount Sinai, the Amalekites ruthlessly picked off all the stragglers at the back of the procession. Unarmed women, children, and old people didn't have a chance as these fierce, bloodthirsty warriors descended on them (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). Israel's rag-tag, inexperienced “warriors” retaliated, and as Aaron and Hur held up the arms of Moses, Israel achieved victory, but the Amalekites still existed as a people, living to fight Israel on another day. After the battle, God told Moses that one day He would “utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” for this unwarranted genocidal activity (Exodus 17:14).

Now, some 395 years later (calculating the Exodus occurred in 1446 and Saul rose to his position in 1051), after much grace and mercy on the part of a holy God, God informed King Saul that he would be the man to carry out His promise to deal with this historically wicked and anti-Semitic nation. God's command was as clear as it was jaw-dropping. The entire godless culture was to be expunged. It is called *charem* (חָרֵם¹) in Hebrew, and it is typically tied to the divine concept of holy war.

¹ The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon: 355-356, †I. [חָרֵם S²⁷⁶³ TWOT^{744, 745} GK^{3049, 3050}] **vb.Hiph. ban, devote, exterminate** (MI¹⁷ הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ of *devoting, dedicating* a city to Chemosh, in cl. with כִּי explaining massacre of all inhabitants; the altar-hearth of י' there was dragged before Chemosh; חָרַם (*haruma*) *be prohibited, forbidden, unlawful, become sacred*; II. *make, pronounce sacred, inviolable*; Ethiopic ለረሰ (*harama*) *prohibit from common use, consecrate to God, esteem unlawful*; Palm. חָרַם = *consacré* Vog³⁵; Nab. *id.*, Eut^P 28; Sab. מַחְרַם *sanctuary, temple*, Os 1865. 176, 252, חַרְמָתוֹ DHM 1875, 594; Aramaic אַחְרִים, and especially אַחְרֵם (*ahrem*) *anathematize, excommunicate*; v. also Weⁱⁱⁱ 165, Dr 100 ff., RS. i 140(150)—**Hiph. Pf.** חָרַמְתָּהּ Jos 8:26 + 5 times; חָרַמְתָּהּ Jos 10:28; 2 ms. וְהַחֲרַמְתָּהּ 1 S 15:18; 1 s. הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ 1 S 15:20; וְהַחֲרַמְתָּהּ Nu 21:2; 2 fs. (י) וְהַחֲרַמְתָּהּ consec. Mi 4:13 (so 𐤄 𐤁 𐤅 RV most; MT 1 s.), v. Ges^{44, R 4}; pl. הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ 1 S 15:9 2 Ch 32:14 etc.; (1 S 15:3 read וְהַחֲרַמְתָּהּ We Dr); **Impf.** חָרַמְתָּהּ Lv 27:28; וְיַחֲרַם Nu 21:3 Jos 10:37; sf. וְיַחֲרַמְתָּהּ Jos 10:1; 1 pl. וְיַחֲרַם Dt 2:34; 3:6 etc.; **Inv.** חָרַם Dt 13:16; pl. הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ Je 51:3; sf. הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ Je 50:26; **Inf. abs.** חָרַם Dt 3:6 + 4 times; **cstr.** חָרַם 2 Ch 20:23 Dn 11:44; sf. הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ Jos 11:20 + 4 times;—**ban, devote** (especially religiously, sq. objects hostile to the theocracy [v. especially Ex 22:19 Hoph.]; this involved gen. their destruction; when a city was ‘devoted’ the inhab. were put to death, the spoil being destroyed or not according to the gravity of the occasion [contrast Jos 6:17, 21 1 S 15:3 with Dt 2:34f.; 3:6, 7], cf. MI¹⁷ כַּמֶּשׁ הַחֲרַמְתָּהּ *to Ashtar-Chemosh I devoted it, i.e. the city Nebo*);— I. most often of devoting to destruction cities of Canaanites and other neighbours of Isr., *exterminating* inhabitants, and destroying or appropriating their possessions: a. Isr. and her leaders subj. Nu 21:2, 3 (destruction according to vow), Jos 6:21 (cf. חָרַם ליהוה v 17; all J); in v 18 read תִּקְדֹּדוּ (for MT חָרַמְתָּהּ, v. Di VB); 8:26 𐤄, not 𐤄L, om. v.), 10:1 (JE), Dt 2:34; 3:6⁰; 7:2⁰ (commanded through Moses, cf. for underlying thought v 4, 5, 6), 20:17⁰ (commanded by י'), Jos 2:10 10:28, 35, 37, 39, 40 (divine command), 11:11, 12, 20, 21 (divine command v 12, 20; all D), 1 S 15:3, 8, 9⁰, 15, 18, 20 (divine command v 3, 18, 20, cf. v 11, 22, 23); quite secondary is simple *exterminate* 1 K 9:21, 1 Ch 4:41. b. secondary meaning *destroy, exterminate*, also with other nations subj.:—2 K 19:11 = Is 37:11 = 2 Ch 32:14, 2 Ch 20:23, Je 50:21, 26 (both by divine command), 51:3 Dn 11:44. c. *God as subj.*, fig. all nations and their armies Is 34:2; the nations of Western Asia Je

As westerners, we tend to see this as barbaric, unwarranted, unjust activity on the part of God; however, many concepts need to be considered:

- One, the move was primarily defensive, not offensive, stressing the right of a nation to defend itself from a nation historically committed to its annihilation.
- Two, the command pertained to a select people group in the Land of Promise at a particular time in history. God never called for such military action against all nations for all time. He did move to protect and rid the Holy Land, the Sacred Land from those who would pollute it with their idolatrous, godless worship (Deuteronomy 7:1-26).
- Three, nations who waged perpetual war against ancient Israel were, in reality, waging war against God Himself. As we might surmise, God would only put up with such activity for so long as He worked to bring the Savior through the line of Israel.
- Four, holy war could be ... and was ... directed against Israel, by God, when they, too, chose to walk in the wickedness of the nations (Isaiah 10; Ezekiel 21).
- Five, throughout the Old Testament, God does not glorify warfare as a solution to problems. Nimrod, a man of war, was not part of the redemptive line (Genesis 10:8-11). Simon and Levi lost their rights as the firstborn because of their association with warfare (Genesis 34; 49:5-7). Moses' elimination of the Egyptian taskmaster actually stalled the deliverance of God (Exodus 2:12). David advanced Israel's territory by warfare, and this activity kept him from building the holy Temple of God (1 Chronicles 22:8).
- Six, the nations placed under the ban (*charem*) in Israel proper had enjoyed hundreds of years of grace and mercy from God. They chose, however, to engage in sins so vile that God says in Leviticus the land finally had to spew them out (Leviticus 18:28). Ostensibly, this means their wickedness had finally reached its climax before a holy God, thereby forcing Him to move in judgment.
- Seven, these limited moves of holy war by God were merely a precursor to the time of the end when He will use warfare to definitively eliminate all those nations bent on the annihilation of His chosen people, Israel (Zephaniah 2-3; Joel 3; Revelation 19).
- Eight, there is a limit to how much wickedness God will put up with. In Romans 2, Paul speaks specifically about sinners make deposits in the bank of sin, and how one day the bank is full and God is, then, moved to judge.

25:9; the tongue of the Egyptian sea (by drying it up) Is 11:15 (but read perhaps *החרים* with ט טז ז). d. so also of *devoting* even Israelites: a city of Isr. for worshipping other gods Dt 13:16; residents of Jabesh-Gilead for not joining in campaign against Benj. Ju 21:11. 2. *devote to* י: for sacred uses ליהוה *החרים* the spoil of the nations Mi 4:13; private possessions, whether a man, animal, or field Lv 27:28 (P). Hoph. *Impf.* יָחַרְמֵם Lv 27:29 Ezr 10:8; יָחַרְמֵם Ex 22:19; — 1. *be put under the ban, devoted* (to death), for worshipping other gods than י Ex 22:19 (JE; earliest use of word in OT); for some other theocratic offence Lv 27:29 (P; v. Di). 2. *devoted, i.e. forfeited*, to the temple treasures Ezr 10:8. — On *חרם* v. especially Di (Kn) Lv 27:28; Ew^{75,78}, Dr 1 S 15:33.¹

- Nine, in the New Testament era our war is not physical, but spiritual, as Paul articulates in Ephesians 6:10ff. We are commanded by Jesus to be people of peace in His first sermon (Matthew 5-7), and His prophecy about the end of time in Matthew 24-25 clearly illustrates that physical judgment against sin and sinners is His sole right, not ours.

God's command, therefore, to King Saul, while harsh, was, from His perspective long overdue. The time for justice had come, and the king would be God's instrument of righteousness as he evidenced obedience.

Such is what God desires from each of us. Obedience to His commands ... even if they are tough, lofty, and demanding. He doesn't want us to waffle, to pick and choose, argue with, or neglect His commands. On the contrary, He wants us to study those commands closely and follow them to the letter so our positional holiness (1 Corinthians 1:3) will become practical, daily holiness. Did you encounter any commands from God this week as you read the Word? Did you shrug your shoulders and move on, or have you given them some serious thought and prayer?

From the next scene in King Saul's life, it appears he put on the coat called obedience after he got the word from God via Samuel.

Scene 2 (1 Samuel 15:4-9): The Engagement

The inspired author tells us what happened next:

⁴ Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. ⁵ Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley. ⁶ Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Telaim was probably located south of Israel in the barren desert of the Negev. Saul wasted no time assembling his entire army of 210,000 soldiers to carry out God's orders. He then set a strategic trap near a main "highway" to frontally attack the main city of the Amalekites, a position enabling him to also catch Amalekites who sought to escape. Yet, before he launched his military maneuver, he evidenced grace and mercy toward the Kenites, a nomadic people of the area who supplied Moses with his wife and they later gave Israel a skilled guide while they were in the wilderness (Numbers 10:29-31). So far so good. King Saul appeared to be acting as a spiritual man, one who understood the balance between holy grace and holy wrath.

The next few verses from this second scene demonstrate the half-hearted obedience of King Saul.

⁷ So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt. ⁸ He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. ⁹ 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 not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

King Saul had the complete ability to fulfill God's command, but he chose, for a variety of selfish reasons to only fulfill part of God's will. Note carefully how he permitted the Amalekite king, Agag, to live ... along with the influence of the people. This is important for our understanding of the ensuing scenes. King Saul was not oblivious to King Agag getting a pass, but was a viable part of this process, along with the decision to keep the best from all the livestock.

All of this leads to a logical and highly pragmatic question: Have you ever modified God's command to you? Have you ever heard what God wants you to do, and then you watered it down so it was more palatable to you and others? Have you ever selfishly thought your way was intrinsically better than God's way? Sure you have. You might be doing it right now, in fact. You hear the commands, they prick your conscience, but you waste no time only obeying them to a point.

You know the commands, don't you? Here's a familiar one:

² For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor ... (1 Thessalonians 4).

Are you really working hard, along with the Spirit's help, to control your body so its lustful desires are held in check, even rooted out? Are you really committed to developing a disciplined life which actually flees any and all forms of sexual immorality, instead of winking at or tolerating it?

Here's another:

²¹ Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart (Colossians 3).

So what about it, fathers? Are the standards in your family so high no child can attain them, and even if they do attain them to you then move the proverbial benchmark? Are you so hard on your children you are crushing their spirits?

Let's look at one more before this exercise gets too painful:

⁶ Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person (Colossians 4).

What about it? Is your speech toward others like a soothing balm, or it is more like a sword in the middle of a battle? Do you build people up or blast them? Does profanity rule supremely in your private life away from church and church people? Is negativity your self-proclaimed "spiritual gift?"

I could go on but I'm sure you get the applicational point. We hear and read God's commands, but all too often the likeness of King Saul rears its ugly head in our lives and we think of all kinds of reasons why partial obedience should be ... and is ... the order of a given day.

Yes, too often we fail to take radical action where sin is concerned, as God has commanded, opting, on the other hand, for a softer, kinder, and gentler approach so we can still be in control of our lives.

Should you be prone to half-hearted obedience to Christ, and should you think you are getting away with wearing this type of carnal clothing, I must counsel you to think again, please. You might dupe yourself into thinking you are spiritual legend, and you might mislead others; however, you do not fool God for one moment, ever. The next scene from this episode teaches us this much:

Scene 3 (1 Samuel 15:10-11): The Enlightenment

Saul's hidden sin wasn't hidden at all. God saw it all:

¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, ¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.

Just imagine if you had a Samuel in your life, a person with whom God gave specific information about your real activities as a disciple. That would make you think twice about being partially obedient to God, wouldn't it? Well, you do have that person and he is, in fact, greater than Samuel. He is called the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you at the moment of conversion (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19, and based on His divine status, you can bank on the fact He knows and is bothered by your sin. Ephesians 4:25 illustrates this truth so well:

²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity. ²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

How else can you, do you, do we, grieve the Holy Spirit apart from the facts He is with us when we are disobedient and He knows of our sin? And in His grief, expect Him to speak into your heart and mind, much like Samuel spoke to King Saul. Will you listen? Will I listen? Is this not the question of the day?

God's first revelatory words to the prophet are not factual, they are emotional. He is so saddened by Saul's half-hearted obedience, He actually regrets choosing him as the first king. Tragic, isn't it, how our sin can cause God to look at us and possibly wonder, "What was I thinking when I chose them?" I wonder if God has ever thought that about you? I wonder if He

is thinking it now? He chose you because He loved you; however, when that love is challenged it's natural to experience deep, gut-wrenching sorrow ... even if you are God.

I think if this story tells us anything, it teaches us about the importance of fully obeying God, even if His Word is counter-culture, will cost you friends, will put you at odds with others, will make you look, well, different, and/or will move people to think you are narrow-minded. It tells us we should also drop the notion our sin is secret. As someone said rightfully years ago, "Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven." How true. Allow me to offer some verses for you to prayerfully consider as you work through this issue of full obedience verses partial obedience:

¹³ The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men (Psalm 33)

²¹ For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths (Proverbs 5).

³ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, watching the evil and the good ... ¹¹ Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the LORD, How much more the hearts of men! (Proverbs 15).

Sin is open scandal in heaven because God sees it, even it is cleverly disguised as obedience. Got any activity going on in your life right now which is scandalous in heaven? If so, first realize that half-hearted obedience is really full disobedience before God. Second, realize sin is dangerous even if you have got away with it for a long time. Let me illustrate.

Reading through *The Blaze* news web site the other day, I came across a most interesting article:

London Woman Found an Object in Her Backyard Shed From WWII That Had Police at Her Door Within Minutes
May. 14, 2015 10:11am

Among the garden tools and pots in her backyard shed, a British woman found an old and potentially dangerous piece of history. "I was taking away some old tools and then I discovered this thing tucked away in the corner," Irene McCulloch from the London borough Bromley's West Wickham neighborhood told the London Evening Standard.

That thing turned out to be an undetonated WWII bomb.

Instead of calling 999 — the country's version of 911 — right away, she slept on it, deciding overnight that she had better phone police about it. "I didn't call 999 because I thought 'well if it's been there for 25 years it can't be that much of an emergency,'" she told the newspaper.

And yet, seven minutes after calling, several police cars were at her door. A London Metropolitan Police spokesman told the Evening Standard that specialists came to retrieve the 2-foot-long shell and dispose of it.

“People in local buildings were advised to leave while the shell was made safe,” the spokesman said.

McColloch said she doesn't know where it came from, but told the newspaper that her husband was known to “[pick] up a lot of old stuff.”²

Isn't this most instructive? A piece of old, rusty metal her husband grabbed and stored for many years didn't look like much to him, when in reality it was so dangerous it could have leveled the whole block had it detonated.

Can you readily see the relationship between the seemingly innocent two foot piece of metal and half-hearted obedience. The latter is just as dangerous, spiritually speaking. It can, and will, level a man, a marriage, a relationship, and so on and so forth. So, I'd counsel you to make a call to God as soon as you can to come clean with your explosive device. He's ready to help. He's ready to help you dispose of that deadly ordinance so you can get on to living life to the fullest.

And to switch back to our opening metaphor, He, God, is ready to help you take off this particular coat of carnality so you can put on a great coat of godliness. The Master Designer is now waiting for your next move.

² Liz Klimas, *London Woman Found An Object In Her Backyard Shed from WWII That Had Police At Her Door Within Minutes*, May 14, 2015, accessed on May 14, 2015, <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/05/14/london-woman-found-an-object-in-her-backyard-shed-from-wwii-that-had-police-at-her-door-within-minutes>.