

Competing Voices

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What should have been an overwhelming victory turned into a terrible tragedy. God's command to King Saul was simple—"utterly destroy" the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:1-3)—but he did not heed the voice of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:1; 19-20; 22). Instead, he listened to his own voice (1 Sam. 15:17), and that of the people (1 Sam. 15:24). He left king Agag alive, along with other spoils of war, which he claimed were to be sacrificed to the Lord (1 Sam. 15:8-9; 21). He did his will--not the Lord's.

Because of his pride, Saul listened to all the wrong voices and it cost him the throne of Israel (1 Sam. 15:22-23). He stands as a tragic reminder for us, that we live in a world full of "voices" that desire to compete against the only voice that matters—God's. Through scripture, Jehovah's voice rings loud and clear today just as it did then. His word is still just as authoritative and His expectation is still the same—complete obedience. But, "voices" around us call us to turn our attention away from the Lord and heed them instead of Him. Consider for a moment what these may be.

- The voice of compromise calls us to throw away our conviction especially in matters that may be controversial like homosexuality or abortion.
- The voice of materialism calls us to focus upon worldly riches instead of spiritual.
- The voice of satisfaction calls us to stop growing spiritually. It wants us to be satisfied with where we are and become stagnant in our faith.
- The voice of convenience calls us to do whatever is easiest at the time. Is it more convenient to skip worship on Sunday night or observe the Lord's Supper once a month instead of weekly?
- The voice of peer pressure calls us to follow the crowd. If it is popular then it should be done.
- The voice of pride calls us to do whatever we want instead of what God wants.

Though Satan calls us to be like him, we must focus our attention on the Lord. As Thomas Chisholm wrote in the well beloved hymn, we are "dead to the world, to voices that call me, living anew obedient but free. Dead to the joys that once did enthrall me, yet tis not I, Christ liveth in me." As we begin a new year, our desire is to turn away from the voices of the world and focus on the voice of God. Therefore, this edition of the Christian Worker is designed to examine some of the voices that compete for our attention. Our plea is simple—"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord" (Jer. 22:29).