

Week 7 - Saul's Costly Disobedience

I Samuel 15

Introduction

Chapter 15 is a difficult section of scripture for many people. And it is difficult for reasons that have little to do with the main point.

The first problem is that God ordered the Amalekites to be wiped out. Atheists have accused Christianity of being pro-genocide over this chapter for a long, long time.

The second problem is that verse 11 and 29 seem to conflict with each other.

I'll deal with both issues as quickly as possible so that we can get to **the main point of this text, which is:**

1. Obedience to God is the same as walking with Him.
2. Disobedience is to turn away from Him.
3. Partial obedience is disobedience
4. The wages of sin is death

Do Not Spare Them

READ I Samuel 15:1-3

How could God command such a thing?

What often happens with these verses, is that people try to lessen the impact. They say it's a bad translation, or that Samuel went rogue and gave a false prophecy.

But this is not a solution. We don't lessen the authority of scripture when scripture says something we don't like.

There is an answer here. We just need to think it through, starting with a Christian worldview.

1- As Creator, God has absolute authority over all people and things. He is the potter, and everything is the clay. He can do whatever He wants with His creation, and He isn't wrong.

The creation cannot question the Creator as though the Creator must answer to His creation.

2- God is the definition of righteous. We do not stand over God as His judge, rather He stands over us. God is not on trial here, we are.

We must be careful as we think through issues like this one, that we do not adopt an atheistic worldview while trying to answer. The question is not "is God right to do this"? If He does it, it's right.

3- No one is innocent, we all deserve God's wrath. That's why every breath is an act of mercy from God.

God was not wrong to send a flood in Noah's day. It's a miracle of mercy that He spared anyone.

4- The Amalekites were enemies of Israel, and therefore enemies of God.

Amalek was the grandson of Esau, who sold his birthright to Jacob. The Amalekites were people that had opted out of being covenant people of God.

When the people of God first left Egypt, the Amalekites attacked them when they had no water. It was unprovoked, Israel was no threat to them (and never would be). They simply hated them.

God gave them a miraculous victory over the Amalekites then, and God spoke to Moses saying:

READ Exodus 17:14-16

"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, saying, "A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

The Israelites never once attacked the Amalekites, but the Amalekites repeatedly tried to wipe them out.

Numbers 14:45, Judges 3:13, Judges 6:3, end of Judges 6, Judges 7

600 years after Saul, in the book of Esther, Haman (an Amalekite descendant) rises to power and stages a plot to wipe the Israelites out again.

The Amalekites were the sworn enemies of Israel, and had been trying to wipe them off the planet since the birth of Israel. They spent 200-400 years trying up until these verses in I Samuel 15. They would continue trying for another 600 years until Esther puts an end to Haman.

Remember that Israel is the people that God chose to be His instrument for revealing Himself to the world. They are not just His special people. They are His method for accomplishing His purpose in Creation to begin with. To declare yourself the generational enemy of Israel, is to intentionally put yourself in direct opposition to God Himself.

5- Jewish law provided specific rules for specific types of warfare (Deut. 20). There was a specific type of warfare called (in English) "devotion to destruction", which was a type of warfare where the people of God were God's instrument of judgement on rebellion against God. But even in these circumstances, if anyone in the enemies city repented they were spared. (Josh. 2, Josh. 11)

In **I Samuel 15:6**, the Kenites are warned and given time to leave.

This is not Ethnic Cleansing, it's God's judgment against a people that have chosen to rebel against God by doing violence against His people for generations.

Amalekites Defeated, Spared

Agag (just a title meaning “king”) and the best cattle (oxen, sheep, fattened calves, lambs) as well as “all that was good”. They killed the stuff they couldn’t use, or didn’t want. Everything else was held back.

READ I Samuel 15:10-11

God tells Samuel what has happened, and God says that He “regrets” making Saul king. “Regret” is probably the wrong English word here. “I’m sorry” is probably more accurate. In English, we think of “regret” as something that we have done that if we had to do it over again we wouldn’t.

That isn’t what’s happening here. Verse 29 makes that clear. God is sorrowful over what Saul is doing, but it is not the kind of sorrow that judges your previous action as being wrong.

We have a category for this ourselves. When Eliana was in the emergency room, I had to hold her down while she got an IV. She looked at me like I was betraying her. It was awful. But I was doing the right thing, and would do it over again.

Samuel Rebukes Saul, Again

READ I Samuel 15:17-23

Saul repents, at least seems to...

READ I Samuel 15:27-28

Obedience Better Than Sacrifice

Relationship with Jesus isn’t measured by your feelings. It’s measured in obedience. How do we know vs 11 is true, that Saul has turned away from following God? He does not obey.

Saul thought he could please God by doing the rituals, like he had always done. But God isn’t interested in that. The point of the sacrifices was to have a relationship with God through obedience. Obedience was what God wanted, not cooked meat!

Partial obedience is disobedience. We can’t thread the needle on this with God. We can’t pretend to obey God, when we are only willing to obey Him in the things that we already want to do.

Agag Destroyed

READ I Samuel 15:32-33

God's command against the Amalekites, and now the death of Agag, demonstrates the reality of the seriousness of sin when seen against the backdrop of the holiness of God.

Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death.

Perfect Obedience in Christ

Our true and better King, Jesus, would come and obey the commands of God perfectly. Where Saul failed, Jesus would succeed.

But Jesus would also take the place of Agag, another king. The king of the enemies of God. We are both Saul and the Amalekites in this story. And Jesus stood in the place of both. He did not sin, He obeyed perfectly. Yet He became sin for us. He became Saul, He became Agag, in our place.

Like Agag, Jesus was torn apart for our sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21 "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.")

Jesus not only satisfied the demands of the law as the once and for all sacrifice, but He also satisfied the goal of the law which was obedience. Your obedience (or lack of it) is made perfect in Christ. His perfect obedience, and relationship with the Father, is credited to your account.