

Introduction

People of God, we continue our series in 1 Samuel with chapter 15—King Saul's tragic fall. Let me give you a brief review of where we have been with Saul. Back in chp. 8 Israel demanded a king, rejecting God's direct rule over them. Despite Samuel's warnings that a human king would take their sons and daughters and all the best of the fields and foods to support a royal court, Israel insisted.

Samuel anointed Saul. By every human standard, perfect. He was tall, humble, and responsible man who honored his father. Yet like Adam, Saul faced tests to prove his fitness to reign. And just like the early chapters of Genesis, his failure came through three distinct falls.

First: When Nahash the Ammonite (meaning "serpent") attacked Jabesh-Gilead, Saul faithfully slew the serpent, unlike Adam. But impatience betrayed him. Like Adam reaching prematurely for forbidden fruit, Saul arrogantly offered sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel. Therefore Samuel declared the kingdom would pass to "a man after God's own heart."

Second: The second fall mirrors Cain's wickedness. Cain murdered his brother Abel because Abel's works were righteous while Cain's were evil. Saul, filled with jealousy,

turned against his own son Jonathan, who had won a great victory for Israel by trusting God. Saul's pride and envy brought him to the brink of killing Jonathan—his own flesh and blood—until the people intervened and ransomed Jonathan.

Third: Today's focus—1 Samuel 15—mirrors Genesis 6, when the Sons of God took wives from men's daughters, producing Nephilim giants and corrupt unclean and impure offspring. Man's wickedness increased so much as a result of this that God grieved that he made man. So He promised to destroy the world in flood.

Saul's disobedience likewise grieved the Lord. He refused to utterly destroy the Amalekites—descendants of those very same Nephilim giants. God regretted making Saul king. As the flood cleansed earth and God raised Noah to begin anew, so Saul's kingdom was taken away, and God chose a better man to lead His people.

Let us now dive a bit deeper into passage to understand

Passage Overview

I. The Clear Command of God (vv. 1–3)

Saul is reminded that the Lord sent Samuel to anoint him to be king over God's people Israel. And as king he must

listen to the voice of the LORD. His authority is not his own; He possesses a stewardship under the Lord. And his obedience to the will of the Lord must therefore be total.

Which is crucial, because God is going to send Saul on a mission to devote the Amalekites to total destruction.

In Exodus 17 the Amalekites attacked Israel as they were coming out of Egypt. Deuteronomy 25 says they attacked the rear of the caravan killing all the stragglers – the women, children, and elderly, the weak and vulnerable. Israel won the battle day, because Moses stood with his hand outraised in prayer, supported by Aaron and Hur until Amalek was defeated.

The Lord saw the attack of the Amalekites on the weak and vulnerable as an attack on himself. So the Lord promised to blot them out, and now the appointed time had come.

II. The Failure of Partial Obedience (vv. 4-9)

Saul musters the troops, attacks the Amalekites from the south to the north of their territory in the Sinai Peninsula, and won a decisive victory. But instead of carrying out God's word fully, Saul spares Agag, king of the Amalekites and allows the people keep the best of the sheep and oxen,

while destroying everything else that was despised and worthless.

III. God's Grief and Samuel's Confrontation (vv. 10-23)

The Word of the Lord came to Samuel: "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me." God's regret is an expression of grief—the sorrow of a holy God whose appointed servant has turned away. The prophet Samuel then grieves as God grieves.

Saul, consumed with his own glory, goes to Mt. Carmel and erects a monument to himself celebrating his defeat of the Amalekites. But, he hadn't completed the job. Saul erected a monument to his own disobedience and unbelief.

When Samuel confronts Saul at Gilgal, Saul claims: "I have performed the commandment of the Lord"—yet bleating sheep and lowing oxen tell another story. Then comes the excuse: "The people spared the best to sacrifice to the Lord, but the rest we devoted to destruction."

God wanted total destruction—everything offered as a whole burnt offering to the Lord. Instead, Saul saved the best animals for a fellowship meal. **You cannot obey through disobedience. You cannot offer God rebellion as worship. Partial obedience is disobedience.**

Samuel, tired of Saul's excuse-making, reminds Saul that though he is now head of Israel's tribes, he was a nobody until the Lord anointed him king. God gave him this position on the condition that he would obey the voice of the Lord. And God told him to completely wipe out the wicked Amalekites. Instead of destroying wickedness, Saul participated in it by doing evil in the Lord's sight.

But Saul persists with excuses, insisting he did obey. He brought Agag but devoted the Amalekites to destruction. The people took the best spoil to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal, he tells Samuel.

Then come Samuel's most memorable lines:

*"Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
²³ 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 also has rejected you from being king."*

IV. The Finality of God's Judgment (vv. 24–35)

When Saul finally admits his sin, he does what all false confessions do—blames someone else. Like Adam blaming

Eve, Saul blames the people. He feared them more than God, caring more about public approval than divine approval. His "repentance" is merely manipulation to get Samuel's public endorsement.

Samuel refuses at first to come back with him, because Saul rejected God's word, and God has rejected him as king.

As Samuel turns to leave, Saul grabs his robe and tears it. Samuel declares: *"The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor who is better than you. And the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man that he should have regret."*

Remember back in v. 11 it says that God "regrets" making Saul king. And it says that again in verse 35. But how can it be that God regrets making Saul king, and also that God is not a man that he should have regrets?

The first "regret" speaks of grief—God's sorrow over Saul's rebellion. The second “regret” means God doesn't change His mind like humans do, based upon the whims of emotional outbursts. God doesn't lie. He keeps His word. He warned Saul what disobedience would bring. God made his decision; He is not going to go back on it. No amount of excuse-making will change God's verdict.

Saul begs Samuel: "Honor me before the people." His concern isn't repentance—it's reputation. Samuel faces an impossible choice: publicly expose God's rejection of Saul and watch Israel descend into civil war, or maintain the facade of royal legitimacy until God's chosen successor is ready. Samuel will worship with Saul one last time, but this is political necessity, not divine approval.

And yet, the verdict still stands: "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day." God is going to give it to a man better than Saul.

Then Samuel does what Saul should have done. He executes Agag, declaring: "As your sword made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal. God's justice will not be thwarted by human compromise.

Samuel then leaves Saul, never to see him again. And the Lord regretted that he made Saul king

APPLICATION

Let us now try to apply this passage to our lives.

1. Hate What God Hates

Some people think God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekites is unfitting for a God of love. So they embrace Marcionism—claiming the wrathful Old Testament God differs from the New Testament God of love. Or they say God evolves, becoming more liberal and tolerant over time.

Scripture gives no such option. There is one God—unchanging, eternal, holy and just—whose love and wrath are in perfect harmony. The God who commands herem warfare in the Old Testament—where entire peoples were "devoted to destruction" as an offering of judgment to the Lord—is the same Christ who returns in flaming judgment according to the New Testament.

The Truth About the Amalekites

Modern people rush to defend those whom God destroyed without asking what they did to deserve judgment. They don't care about the depth of their wickedness—only about feeling morally superior by accusing God Almighty.

The Lord reserved herem warfare for the worst sinners—chiefly the wicked Canaanites who were offspring of Nephilim. These giant, hybrid beings spread violence and evil before and after the flood (Genesis 6:1–4). Israel was commanded to eradicate these giants and their

descendants. Their wickedness was extraordinary in the sight of God. They were the living embodiment of Satan's attempt to corrupt God's image in man, physically and spiritually. Their depravity was total.

The Amalekites were among the worst. The Arabs call Amalek "Imlaq," meaning Giant. Ancient Egyptian records tell of Amalek's son, Adim, as a violent prince of great stature—15 feet tall. He invented crucifixion and built pyramids using dark magic taught by fallen angels, creating an amazing kingdom with temples and statues through scientific advancement that can only be explained by such magic. It was during his time that Satan first made idols known to men.

In Numbers 24, Balaam says "Amalek was first among the nations." They were first because they were extremely ancient people—the first to learn dark arts from fallen sons of God and build the first great kingdom promoting magic, idolatry, and unimaginable evil.

The Hebrew name for Amalekites means "to twist, wring," or "to lick, or lap"—likely named from twisting off heads and drinking blood. Samuel says Agag would "make women childless"—cutting them open to kill unborn children. These weren't kind, unsuspecting people that the Lord chose to eradicate.

Our Response to God's Justice

Yet today, people rush to defend the most vile, God-hating, Satanically-inspired creatures who ever walked the earth. They scorn God's justice, sympathize with His enemies, and call Him cruel for punishing wickedness. This is the spirit of antichrist—opposing Christ's reign, despising His righteousness, siding with the serpent against God.

It's sanctimonious blasphemy—pious rebellion that sets human sentiment above divine justice, presuming to look down on the Judge of all the earth and imagining ourselves more merciful, loving, and just than God Himself.

Here's how the world gets us to apostatize: We start by elevating ourselves, thinking we're wiser than previous generations. Then we convince ourselves that God did something immoral. Soon we become embarrassed by Scripture itself, explaining away the Bible's clear teaching on sin, judgment, and hell because it offends people who hate God.

When we refuse to call evil "evil" for fear of being labeled unloving, when we reshape biblical truth to appease modern sensibilities, we've fallen into the sin of Saul. Like Saul, we reject God's Word because we fear people more than we fear God.

Learning from Samuel's Heart

The Prophet Samuel loved what God loved and grieved what God grieved. Do you grieve for what grieves God? Do you rejoice in what makes the Lord rejoice?

"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," Proverbs 8:13 declares. Yet we're constantly told that righteous hatred of wickedness is "unchristian." We've been domesticated by a false gospel of perpetual niceness. Our moral sensibilities have been neutered by sentimental religion that mistakes weakness for virtue and calls biblical conviction "unloving."

We no longer burn with holy indignation when God's name is blasphemed or His Word is trampled. Instead, we've been trained to smile politely at evil, to "agree to disagree" with abomination, and to reserve our strongest emotions for sports teams and entertainment.

We ought to hate what God hates, with a perfect hatred, and call upon God to utterly destroy those things which are an abominable iniquity.

2. The Danger of Partial Obedience

"He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive. He spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all

that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed."

This self-serving selective obedience represented an early attempt to pursue gain under the guise of serving God. Why let good things go to waste when we can enjoy them?

We all have sins we utterly despise—easy to destroy because they're worthless to us. But other sins still look attractive. We hold onto them, unwilling to completely eradicate what feeds our flesh.

Saul's Fatal Compromise

Saul refused total obedience. He held onto what fueled his chief sin: pride. He let the people keep the best animals for peace offerings, knowing it would make him look good in their eyes. He craved the praise and honor of men – which is what the fear of man is – over the fear of the Almighty.

More telling—he spared Agag. Some say he wanted to parade him as a trophy. But I believe something deeper was happening.

Saul saw himself and Agag as fellow royalty. Both kings, both tall like the ancient giant kings. "We don't kill each other," his pride whispered. "Let the people kill each other,

but not we royalty." Saul was impressed by all the wrong things.

He refused to see that Agag, in his extreme wickedness, was an inheritor of Satanic idolatry and dark magic who deserved death, not admiration. Agag was God's enemy—and by sparing him, Saul revealed he was aligning himself as God's enemy too.

The Truth About Our Sin

This is the essence of partial obedience:

We obey God in areas that cost us nothing while protecting the sins that still serve us. We destroy the "worthless" sins that embarrass us publicly while nursing the "valuable" ones that feed our pride, lust, or comfort.

But God will not be mocked. What a man sows, he reaps. When we bargain with the Almighty—keeping our "pet" sins while offering Him our religious performances—we commit the same treason as Saul.

Partial obedience is disobedience. There is no middle ground with the King of kings. Either Christ is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.

The Red Lizard

In C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, a man arrives in heaven with a red lizard on his shoulder—whispering lustful thoughts in his ear. An angel repeatedly asks, "May I kill it?" But the man refuses, making excuses: "It's such a little thing," "It isn't doing any harm," "I need time to think." The lizard represents his cherished sin—small enough to seem manageable, familiar enough to seem harmless.

Finally, after much agonizing, the man consents to let the angel destroy it, and after the lizard dies—it is immediately transformed into a magnificent stallion that carries the man deeper into heaven's glory. What he thought would diminish him and be his death actually liberated him for greater joy and glory.

Personal Application

Search your heart, people of God. What "Agag" are you keeping alive? What red lizard are you protecting on your shoulder? What sin are you sparing because it still whispers sweet lies in your ear? What area of rebellion are you nursing under the guise of serving God?

The Holy Spirit stands ready with the same question: "May I kill it?" Stop making excuses. Stop negotiating with sin. Let Him hack to pieces those sins you cherish.

Kill it. Show no mercy. Total surrender is the only obedience God accepts—and the only path to true freedom.

3. Look to the True King

But here's the glorious truth, people of God: Where Saul failed in his calling to execute God's justice, Christ succeeded perfectly. Saul showed mercy to Agag, the wicked king who deserved death. But Jesus Christ showed no such mercy to Satan, the prince of the power of the air.

Christ did not consider Satan worthy of remaining alive. He did not spare the serpent or negotiate with the dragon. On the cross, Jesus crushed the head of the ancient enemy, dealing him total, utter defeat. Where Saul compromised with evil, Christ annihilated it.

The very Amalekites that Saul failed to destroy were descendants of those who had aligned themselves with Satan's rebellion. But Christ succeeded where Israel's king failed—He destroyed the works of the devil, stripped principalities and powers of their authority, and made a public spectacle of them through His victory on the cross.

Jesus didn't partially obey the Father's will—He obeyed even unto death on a cross, the instrument first created by the ancient Amalekite king. He didn't spare the "valuable" parts of Satan's kingdom while destroying only the

"worthless" ones. He conquered death, hell, and the grave completely. He who knew no sin became sin for us, faced the full wrath of God that we deserved, and emerged victorious over every enemy.

While we must pursue wholehearted obedience, our standing before God rests not on our faithfulness but on the righteousness of Christ's crucifixion. Where we have been like Saul—partial, excuse-making, fearful—Jesus was the true King who never compromised, never made excuses, never feared man more than God.

He is the LORD of Hosts who completed what Saul refused to finish. In Him, we find both the motivation for obedience and the forgiveness for our disobedience. So long as we look to him with true repentant hearts, which hate our sins, and not try to make excuses for them.

So, let us look in faith to the true King who conquers where we capitulate, who destroys what we would spare, who stands victorious over every enemy. He is our hope, our champion, our conquering King. Believe in Him and be saved. Amen.

Samuel's rebuke to King Saul reveals a profound truth: God desires obedience more than religious ritual. When Samuel declares that "rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft," he shows us what spiritual rebellion really is—using our own will to manipulate God for our advantage.

But where Saul failed, Christ succeeded. Saul sought power through self-will, but Jesus submitted to the Father's will. He didn't seek power—He laid down His life as a ransom for many.

Here's the beautiful truth: Christ's perfect obedience *became* the perfect sacrifice. His complete submission to the Father made His death the once-for-all offering we needed.

As we take the bread, we remember His body broken in loving obedience. As we drink the cup, we remember His blood poured out in perfect submission. His sacrifice speaks of a King who never rebelled, never sought His own way.

We don't bring our own sacrifices—we receive His. We don't offer our obedience as payment—we celebrate His perfect obedience that covers all our rebellion.

What God truly desired—a heart fully surrendered to His will—has been accomplished in Christ and His death on the cross. Now come, receive Jesus Christ, and the blessings of His everlasting kingdom. Lift up your hearts!