

I Samuel Lesson 15

I Samuel Chapter 15

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Memory verses for this week: *John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Samuel this week. In last week's lesson, we studied about the bravery of Jonathan as he and his armour bearer went up and attacked the Philistine garrison by themselves. God used their bravery to lead Israel in a great victory over the Philistines.

I. The Amalekite War

1 Sam 15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

1 Sam 15:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

1 Sam 15:3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

After Saul had been king for a time, the Lord sent Samuel to him commanding him to carry out the prophecy which God had given Moses centuries before this. This was during the time when Israel came out of Egypt and dwelled in the wilderness. The desert tribes of Amalek had attacked Israel and tried to claim the water which the Lord had given Israel. If you remember, Moses struck the rock on Mount Horeb and water gushed forth.

Exo 17:8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

Exo 17:9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

Exo 17:10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Exo 17:11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel

prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

Exo 17:12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Exo 17:13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

This account of Joshua leading the Israelites against Amalek in the valley of Rephidim is good. When Moses held up his hands, Israel would win, but when they came down the enemy would win. Aaron and Hur stood on each side of Moses to keep his hands up so that Joshua could lead the children of Israel in victory over the Amalekites. Because Amalek had defied God and struck His people his people, God wore a perpetual enmity until Amalek was destroyed. Samuel is given instruction to go and smite Amalek. He was to destroy all the men, women and children as well as all their cattle, sheep, and camels. They were in effect to utterly destroy the nation. This shows the judgment that comes on the world when it rejects God and defies His very commandments.

1 Sam 15:4 And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

1 Sam 15:5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

1 Sam 15:6 And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

Saul gathered his army at Telaim which was near the southern border of Judah next to the desert. There were gathered 200,000 foot soldiers out of Israel, and another 10,000 out of Judah. He came to one of their cities and encamped against it. Saul sent word to the Kenites who lived among the Amalekites that they should get out from among them or else they would be destroyed also. The Kenites were the descendants of Moses' father-in-law and had befriended the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.

1 Sam 15:7 And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.

1 Sam 15:8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

1 Sam 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they

destroyed utterly.

Israel fell on the Amalekites and smote them from Havilah to Shur. Havilah was the wilderness area eastward to the Euphrates River and the Arabian Sea. Shur was the wilderness area on the entrance to Egypt, a very large area. The instructions Samuel gave Saul was to destroy everyone including the animals, but in verse 9 we see that he spared the king Agag and some of the best of the animals. Agag, king of the Amalekites was taken prisoner and brought back to Israel alive. As had been the case earlier, Saul did not seem to take the command of the Lord seriously.

He thought he could interpret what the instructions were to suit himself. Many churches today are using this same logic. They ignore clear commands and axioms laid down in the Bible, and do what they feel is right. Our righteousness in comparison to God is as filthy rags. What may sound so good may be a horrible thing in God's sight. We need to just trust God, and obey his commands. We won't go wrong if we do.

1 Sam 15:10 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

1 Sam 15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

The word of the Lord came to Samuel. God told Samuel that it repented Him that he had made Saul king over Israel. God help us to never be so disobedient that God would wish negative things against us. God effectively despised Saul's kingship. This really touched Samuel, and it says that he was grieved and cried unto the Lord all the night. I believe he was beseeching the Lord to forgive Saul of his failures. But when someone sins, that person needs to be the one who comes humbly to God and seeks forgiveness. We can pray for others, but it is the sinner who must seek God's face for forgiveness.

II. Samuel Confronts Saul

1 Sam 15:12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

1 Sam 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

1 Sam 15:14 And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

1 Sam 15:15 And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

When Samuel met Saul, Saul says that he had performed the commandments of the Lord. Saul had first come to Carmel and then went down to Gilgal. I believe Saul was waiting to hear praise from Samuel for him doing such a great job. Saul is much like many today who think the Lord is pleased with us in partial obedience to His Word. What God said He means, and He says it clearly in the Word. If we want God's blessings and acceptance in our life, we must do all the commandments of the Lord.

Samuel questions Saul in verse 14 and asks "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Saul has a quick response, and says he brought them down to offer as a sacrifice unto God. All the bad animals he said were destroyed as commanded.

1 Sam 15:16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

1 Sam 15:17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

1 Sam 15:18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

1 Sam 15:19 Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?

1 Sam 15:20 And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

1 Sam 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Samuel tells Saul to stay and hear what the Lord had said to him the night before. Samuel in verse 17 talks of Saul's humility when he was anointed the king of Israel. At this point, this seems like a long time ago. Rather than being humble and following God's commands, Saul was now doing what seemed right to him. Rather than destroying the Amalekites as he was commanded, he saved King Agag alive.

Because of this, he had committed evil in his actions. Saul again explains how that he had good intentions in bringing back the excellent animals. He again affirms that he had obeyed the voice of the Lord. While he did do some of the Lord's commands, he certainly did not follow all of them. We have to fight the

tendency in our Christian lives to not do just part of the work the Lord commands us to do. Notice how in verse 21 Saul tries to share some of the blame when he says 'the people took of the spoil to bring it back to make a sacrifice.' This is probably true, but as leader he should have seen this was not done.

Micah 6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

Micah 6:8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

God wants obedience, not sacrifice. He wants us to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Note what Samuel says to Saul in verse 22. Saul had come far short of doing the perfect will of God.

1 Sam 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath 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 hearken than the fat of rams.

1 Sam 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Matthew Henry said this about Saul

Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, v. 20, 21. He denies the charge (v. 20): "Yea, I have obeyed, I have done all I should do;" for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself. God bade him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience that he brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it that he has utterly destroyed the Amalekites themselves, which was the main thing intended; but, as to the spoil, he owns it should have been utterly destroyed; so that he knew his Lord's will, and was under no mistake about the command. But he thought that would be wilful waste; the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time (Num. 31:32, etc.), and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be prey to the Israelites than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people's carrying it away. But it was their doing and not his; and, besides, it was for sacrifice to the Lord here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience of their sin and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

III. Saul's Confession to Samuel

1 Sam 15:24 And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.

1 Sam 15:25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

1 Sam 15:26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

1 Sam 15:27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

1 Sam 15:28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

1 Sam 15:29 And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.

1 Sam 15:30 Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.

1 Sam 15:31 So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Saul acknowledges that he has sinned. Sometimes we can repent, and we may find forgiveness for God for our actions, but the damage is already done that can not be brought back. In this case, although Saul admits his error and says he did it because he feared the people. As a leader, fearing the people is one excuse God does not accept. God's man is to stand by the Word of God, and Saul had failed in this. Because Saul had rejected the word of the Lord, Samuel refuses to return with him. He says in verse 28 that God had rent the kingdom from Saul that day. I believe that from this day, God had made up his mind to give the kingdom to David, and this came to pass, but it was quite a length of time before David took the throne. Saul worships the Lord in verse 31.

IV. Samuel Slays Agag

1 Sam 15:32 Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

1 Sam 15:33 And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

1 Sam 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

1 Sam 15:35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Since Saul did not follow through with the commands of God, Samuel takes a sword and cut King Agag into pieces. After this, Samuel had no more dealings with Saul and came no more to see him. The bible repeats the reality that “The Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.” As Brother Huckaby, a good friend, used to say, “When God repeats something in scripture, he is making a point.” So true in this case. Saul was not a man after God’s own heart, but the next king, King David, would be that man.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.