

## 1 Samuel (Sh'mu'el Alef)

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### Chapter 15

**1 And Samuel (Sh'mu'el) said unto Saul (Sha'ul), 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.<sup>1</sup>**

**2 Thus hath said the LORD of the hosts, I remember that which Amalek ('Amalek) did to Israel (Isra'el), how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> At this point, though Saul was under judgment for meddling in Samuel's duties by making an offering that Samuel was supposed to make, and therefore the kingship was going to pass out of his family, he still had opportunity to receive other blessings through being obedient to the Lord. His reign could be blessed while he lived and his children could receive blessings for his sake, if he made use of the powerful anointing on him to fulfill God's will.

Saul had made a mistake and lost some great blessings because of it, but he could have done damage control and been obedient from then on to ensure that he did not lose anything more. What Samuel was about to tell him was that God was giving him opportunity to receive great blessing through obedience, but it seems that Saul was sulking in his spirit that he could not recover what had been lost and was not willing to lose any part of the destiny that he could have had. He was angry at God for exercising His prerogative to punish him and did not appreciate God's mercy in that, at this point, He had not cast him off in regards to his soul, or in being blessed in his lifetime, though He had cast him off in regards to founding a dynasty.

<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of years have passed, but God has not forgotten that He ordered the Amalekites to be destroyed. What the Amalekites did was a great affront to God's dignity. The nations that surrounded Egypt had seen God bare His arm on the behalf of the Israelites, to chastise Egypt for their sake, and various combinations of those plagues were also visited on other nations to rebuke them for their idolatry and their cruelty, including the Amalekites.

The Amalekites had lived in Medina, but their city was invaded by tiny ants that drove them out, and there had been floods from tidal waves. The Amalekites had gone on the move, looking for another place to settle, murdering and plundering as they went. They did not heed God's rebuke, but rather they took advantage of the distress of other tribes.

They were like people in modern times who take advantage of a natural disaster like Hurricane Katrina, to loot and rape because there is not enough law enforcement to curb their activities. It is bad enough that people are troubled by nature, but then to have more tragedy piled on by people is too much.

Those events are opportunities from God for people to demonstrate repentance from their selfishness by demonstrating care and concern for others, in spite of one's own needs, helping however one can, perhaps by rescuing others from death, getting medical care for the injured, protecting children and woman from sexual predators, cooperating with organizing efforts to meet the community's needs, maybe just sharing a can of food or bottle of water with someone else and trusting God to meet their needs for their next meal and their next drink of water. Not trusting God to meet our needs is a sin that leads to hoarding or stealing.

The Amalekites had a very wide mean streak in them. They were like an outlaw gang, taking advantage of other people's calamities to improve their own situation. They did not humble themselves under God's rebuke, but retaliated against God by not showing any mercy to the poor, and they did not respect those who wanted to protect the poor. They surely must have met with some valiant warriors who tried to protect their loved ones and their communities, but fell under their onslaught, just as they surely must have met with some cowards and some opportunists who joined their numbers.

Then they came across the Israelites, whom everyone knew God had favoured by protecting them from the plagues and delivering them out of bondage to Egypt. They knew of God's judgment upon Pharaoh when he had a change of heart and chased after the Israelites, wherein he and all that were with him perished in the Red Sea, but the Amalekites set their face against God and attacked His people. They wanted the spoil that God had given to them, and they wanted the opportunity to indulge their evil passions further by raping, torturing, maiming, and killing these people.

The other tribes would have fought Israel, if the Israelites had gone into their territory to take it over, in self-defence, but they knew better than to go looking for trouble by seeking out the Israelites to meddle with them, if the Israelites left them alone. When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they wandered in the wilderness of Midian, where they had a treaty with the Midianites through Moses' father-in-law.

The Amalekites were sweeping through that territory on their way west, troubling it as they went along, so the Midianites were grateful, for a time, that the Israelites fought the Amalekites and forced them to keep moving west, out of Midianite lands, until hard feelings about Zipporah, whom Moses divorced, stirred some of the Midianites up and they went to war against Israel at the end of their wandering.

The Amalekites operated like wolves, attacking the back of the procession where the weakest members were moving along more slowly than the rest. The Israelites would not have troubled the Amalekites if they had passed on by, minding their own business.

The Israelites were not taking advantage of the distress of any of the other tribes. They had plundered the Egyptians, but it was wages that was owed to their nation for putting them under unlawful servitude, and if they killed any of the Egyptians by their own hand, it was the soldiers who had been put in charge of monitoring them when they went into the wilderness to worship God, and then tried to force them to return to Egypt after three days.

Without any provocation, the Amalekites attacked an innocent people who were under the protection of the Almighty God who had shown favour to these people. It was like they spit in God's face and said, "We don't care what you did for these people to free them. We want them for our sport and to be our slaves. We want the spoil you gave them for ourselves. You may have been able to humble the Egyptians, but you can't withstand us and our gods."

If one doubts that people can be that evil, consider the caste system of India, where the law turns a blind eye when men of higher caste rape and murder women of a lower caste. There is a case in 2014 where some men were arrested for raping and murdering a 12 year old girl and her 14 year old cousin, but only because pictures of their bodies hanging from a tree were posted on the Internet and went across the world, and people from other nations are watching to see what the Indian government is going to do about it.

Consider Islam, where even some of the women are militant about it, regardless of how it subjugates women, because it has afforded them more opportunity to behave like brutes when it has taken more territory and brought slaves into their households for them to terrorize.

In modern times, there are plenty of cases of poor Filipina and Ethiopian servants in Arab countries who have been worked from early morning to late at night, without being paid wages, beaten by the mistress of the house, sexually assaulted and tortured by the husband (possibly by some of the wives, as well), and put in jail when they ran away. Human beings certainly are capable of being depraved. The Amalekites excelled in cruelty and depravity.

As evil as the Egyptians were, and Pharaoh even admitted that he and his people were evil, God did not call for them ALL to be wiped out, so if He called for the Amalekites to all be wiped out, He who can see what is in every

**3 Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare him not, but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.<sup>3</sup>**

**4 And Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telaim,<sup>4</sup> two hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand men of Judah.<sup>5</sup>**

**5 And Saul came to a city of Amalek<sup>6</sup> and laid wait in the valley.<sup>7</sup>**

**6 And Saul said unto the Kenite, Go, depart, go out from among those of Amalek lest I destroy you with them, for ye showed mercy to all the sons of Israel when they came up out of Egypt.<sup>8</sup> So the Kenite departed from among those of Amalek.**

**7 And Saul smote Amalek from Havilah<sup>9</sup> until thou comest to Shur that is over against Egypt.**

**8 And he took Agag,<sup>10</sup> the king of the Amalekites, alive and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.<sup>11</sup>**

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heart, and knows what those babies would have done, if they had been allowed to live, can be trusted that He certainly had just cause to order them all wiped out.

<sup>3</sup> If one understands the dynamics of these brutal and psychotically selfish people's arrogance, it helps one to understand better why God commanded that they all be wiped out. With evil men such as these to improve their situation, the Amalekite women rejoiced in being placed over slaves whom they could bully unmercifully, and their children had inherited the nature of their parents. The soul of that nation was poisoned with a virulent rebellion against God, and they tainted all that came into their possession.

God did not want the Israelites to take any spoil from these people because He wanted it understood by Israel and the other nations that the Israelites destroyed the Amalekites because they were so evil, not because they stood to gain from material gain. It was to be a warning to Israel and the nations to curb themselves from being evil, lest they also came under his judgment.

<sup>4</sup> Telaim, or Telem, was to the south, near the border of Edom. It means "lambs," and was probably a wide, open space where lambs were gathered from the pastures.

<sup>5</sup> The tribe of Judah might not have been very forthcoming about volunteering for military service under Saul because they remembered the prophecy that the sceptre would be from their tribe. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." [Gen 49:10 ]

<sup>6</sup> Auaris (Tanis) on the border of Egypt, Agag's royal city. It was built on an eastern branch of the Nile. Military might was concentrated there to protect Egypt from invasion.

<sup>7</sup> The river bed, which dried out during the summer.

<sup>8</sup> Descendants of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law.

<sup>9</sup> Havilah was on the border of Assyria (northern Iraq, northeast Syria and southeastern Turkey) The Amalekite Empire was extensive. Ishmael's sons dwelt from Shur to Havilah. "And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren." [Genesis 25:17 & 18]

<sup>10</sup> Agag was the name given to Amalekite kings, such as Pharaoh was the title given to Egyptian kings. Haman the Agagite was descended from the royal line of the Amalekite kings, his ancestor a survivor of Saul's purges. Haman hated Mordecai, not only because he would not bow to him, but because he was a Jew and a Benjamite, probably of Saul's lineage through Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, or descended from Ner, Saul's uncle. Kish was a family

**9 But Saul and the people spared Agag<sup>12</sup> 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,<sup>13</sup> but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.**

**10 ¶ Then the word of the LORD came unto Samuel, saying,**

**11 It grieves me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me<sup>14</sup> and has not performed my commandments. And it incensed Samuel,<sup>15</sup> and he cried unto the LORD all night.<sup>16</sup>**

**12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning,<sup>17</sup> it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel,<sup>18</sup> and, behold, he set himself up a monument<sup>19</sup> and is gone about and passed on and gone down to Gilgal.<sup>20</sup>**

name in that line. Haman hated the Jews for nearly wiping out his tribe, and he especially hated Benjamites, as they were related to Saul.

<sup>11</sup> Saul had no compunction about killing all the other people, so it wasn't because of a sense of mercy that he spared Agag.

<sup>12</sup> I think that Saul spared Agag to gloat over him. Having wiped out Agag's city, he becomes overconfident that he can handle Agag, but Agag is clever and discerns that Saul is insecure; hence the need to gloat. Agag was probably decked out in a fabulous crown and robes when Saul captured him, and he was likely very impressed with Agag's glory, and smug that he had bested him, so he wanted to rub it in. In so doing, he gave Agag an extension on his life, which afforded him time to manipulate Saul and watch for an opportunity to escape.

<sup>13</sup> Greed has come into play. And as one commentator pointed out, while they were herding those sheep to Carmel, where he set up a monument to celebrate his victory, and then carried on herding his spoil to Gilgal, they weren't chasing down the Amalekites who managed to escape. This escapade may very well have been what saved Haman the Agagite's ancestor from being apprehended and caused so much distress to the Jews when they were under Persian rule.

<sup>14</sup> Saul did follow God for a time, as long as it suited him to do so. When he felt that he had the reins of power firmly in his hands, he figured that he didn't need God anymore. He didn't want God's direction about everything. If it would give him victory in battle, that was fine, but there were some things that Saul wanted to make up his own mind about, such as what to do with the spoil after the battle was won. His act may have seemed small to some, but it gave evidence of huge flaws in his character.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel was extremely upset to learn that Saul had disobeyed the Lord again, but he was sorry that Saul was going to be punished further. What remained of his reign was going to be very troubled. If Saul had accepted God's judgment and obeyed from then on, he could have had a much easier reign, with blessings added as a reward for repentance. Someone outside of his family would still have reigned next, but he would have been remembered with much more honour.

<sup>16</sup> This is a wonderful example of godliness. Samuel was an intercessor. He prayed for consistently for his nation and his king, and wrestled on Saul's behalf, until the Lord told him to stop. The Lord didn't do it, though, until Samuel had passed the whole night in that exercise.

God did so to make the point that we should be tenacious about interceding for our leaders, and that we should love them for their good attributes, as Samuel did Saul, though, eventually, he had to just cut him loose and stay away from him because Saul went renegade against the Lord and abused his position too much. To give him credit, though, he didn't become totally despotic.

<sup>17</sup> Saul was supposed to meet Samuel somewhere, but he doesn't show up. That's because he has a guilty conscience. He isn't supposed to have Agag and all those herds with him. He hurries on to Gilgal, where he is going

**13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD;<sup>21</sup> I have performed the commandment of the LORD.<sup>22</sup>**

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to make a show of being righteous by sacrificing the animals to God and executing Agag there, pretending that, rather than having disobeyed God, he had only delayed, but was still going to obey.

If Saul didn't have to answer to Samuel, the man who made him king and from whom he was supposed to take direction, he probably would have divvied up those animals among his men and figured out something else to do with Agag. He possibly would have liked to have kept him imprisoned as a permanent trophy to gloat over and to show off to his friends.

<sup>18</sup> This was a place in the south named Carmel, where Nabal pastured his flocks, and David hid from Saul. It is not Mount Carmel in the north. Saul was returning from the border of Egypt and stopped here on his way to Gilgal, which was east of Jericho. This Carmel is ten miles southeast of Hebron, a half hour's journey to the northwest of Maon, where Nabal lived, according to commentaries. [Ellicott; Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsh; Pulpit Commentary]

<sup>19</sup> This was not a monument to glorify God, but for Saul, in his pride, to celebrate his victory over the Amalekites. The officer named Ahmose had his tomb inscribed with a description of Egypt's liberation that was led by Saul, but Saul was not named. On this monument, Saul may have had his name inscribed, but the monument did not endure and it is not even known anymore where this Carmel was.

Saul was obviously satisfied with what he had done in regards to the Amalekites. He had won some decisive victories and broken up their empire. But he ignored what God said about destroying them down to the last person and animal because it didn't suit him.

<sup>20</sup> Why did Saul go to Gilgal? Perhaps to comfort himself over what Samuel told him before when he disobeyed the Lord, that his kingdom would be transferred out of his family. He possibly came there to make a huge offering of animals, like he said, possibly to try to propitiate God and get Him to change His mind. It was cheap of him, though, to try to do it with animals that didn't actually belong to him, that should have been left dead at the scene of battle. And then, of course, he and the army would have feasted on the animals, as part of the ceremony. Their victory monument was at Carmel and their victory feast was supposed to be at Gilgal.

To please Samuel, he intended to execute Agag there at Gilgal, not fully realizing every moment of delay put Israel in jeopardy, for Agag was doubtlessly waiting for opportunity to escape. It was also giving Agag an opportunity to engage Saul's emotions, to gain his sympathy by pretending kinship in kingship, which would have caused further delays in Saul carrying out Agag's execution.

I think that Saul wanted to revisit this place of spiritual defeat and judgment to turn it around to become a place of restoration of favour, but he was operating in the flesh and it again became a scene of spiritual defeat and judgment. When God sets a judgment, that's it. If we accept His judgments, He can make something good come out of it, like what happened when Hezekiah accepted the word of the Lord, but if we refuse and rebel, we just make things worse.

<sup>21</sup> Saul attempts to flatter Samuel, to disguise the fact that he had not obeyed Samuel when he relayed the Word of the Lord to him.

<sup>22</sup> Incredible cheek. Liars tend to be impudent, boldly denying the truth, though they are well aware that the person they are lying to knows the truth of the matter. However, Saul's conscience still bothers him, and he wants to point out to Samuel that he carried out most of what he was told to do. Saul knows very well that he has not carried out everything that he was told to do. He is feeling guilty about how he has been enjoying himself toying with Agag, instead of killing him right away, and he has no idea that Agag has been toying with him in return.

**14 Then Samuel said, What means then this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?<sup>23</sup>**

**15 And Saul said, They have brought them from Amalek, for the people<sup>24</sup> spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God,<sup>25</sup> and the rest we have utterly destroyed.<sup>26</sup>**

**16 Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay,<sup>27</sup> and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night.<sup>28</sup> And he said unto him, Say on.<sup>29</sup>**

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel points out that this is an obvious lie.

<sup>24</sup> A weak attempt to shift blame. It must have been embarrassing to Saul that people afterwards related how he showed his wishy-washy character in not taking responsibility for what he had done.

<sup>25</sup> Very telling that Saul refers to God as Samuel's God, not as his own. He is implying that he spared the best animals as a favour to God, and to Samuel, so that Samuel can make a big display of sacrifice that will add to his own consequence. Samuel didn't care about that. He just wanted God to be obeyed, and by obeying God, one does not do God a favour; they do themselves a favour. Whatever God asks of us is always going to benefit us in some way, if not in this life, then most certainly in the next.

It wasn't legal, anyway, for them to offer these animals to the Lord in sacrifice. Devoted things belonged to the Lord in the first place, and were meant to be utterly destroyed on site. An offering is supposed to cost something to the person who offers it. Saul and his men had no right of ownership of these animals.

<sup>26</sup> He only destroyed what he didn't want. The Amalekites would not have made good slaves because they were so fierce. It would have been like trying to handle scorpions. They knew they couldn't get away with taking gold and jewels; it was all devoted to the Lord and all Israel knew it. But they could have a feast on some prime livestock under the cover of offering it to the Lord. The thing is, though, if they had done that, they would have given the evil spirits that were formerly attached to the Amalekites permission to latch onto them and change their personalities to develop wicked Amalekite attributes.

Actually, because Saul did not sincerely repent of what he did, he developed some Amalekite attributes. He disrespected the priests of God and ordered all the priests of Nob and their families to be murdered because they gave refuge to a man whom God had chosen to rule Israel. It would have been bad enough to order ordinary Israelites, his own people, to be killed unjustly, but the priests who served God should have been inviolate. This reflected the Amalekite disrespect for God.

<sup>27</sup> Saul had started to walk away, figuring that his explanation should be sufficient. He figured that, by coming to Gilgal, it was obvious that he had every intention of sacrificing those animals to the Lord, and that Samuel should be satisfied with that. Samuel and the Lord aren't finished with him, though.

The fact that Saul turned his back to walk away from Samuel before Samuel has finished talking indicates that he has developed an arrogant attitude towards the prophet. Samuel set Saul up as king, as the Lord's command. Saul was supposed to rule under the guidance of Samuel, but he does not want to submit any longer. In fact, it was very soon after he became king, in only two years, that he stopped wanting to submit.

Now he wants to be in complete control over Samuel, but Samuel still speaks with God's authority, and the people would not have stood for flagrant disrespect of the prophet, not even from the king, at this point, though they did not depose him later when Saul had the priests killed and Samuel had to hide from him. By then, I suppose, his officers had become firmly established and did not want to lose the positions and other benefits that came from supporting Saul in his despotism.

**17 And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight,<sup>30</sup> wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel,<sup>31</sup> and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?<sup>32</sup>**

**18 And the LORD sent thee on a journey<sup>33</sup> and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners of Amalek<sup>34</sup> and fight against them until they are consumed.<sup>35</sup>**

**19 Why then didst thou not hear the voice of the LORD but didst fly upon the spoil<sup>36</sup> and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?**

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<sup>28</sup> This catches his attention. Even when rulers are evil, and even if they regularly consult with evil spirits, though Saul did not do this at that time, rulers want to hear prophecies from the Lord, to see if it works to their advantage, or to figure out how to work around it, if it is not a favourable word.

<sup>29</sup> Saul wants to know what the Lord has said about him, or what Samuel thinks the Lord said about him. Saul doubts God, but he wants to know what a greatly influential man thinks about him. In his self-will, he would feel that he needed to come up with a strategy to counteract Samuel's influence, if it is used against him.

<sup>30</sup> Saul has become puffed up. Being king has gone to his head. His pride made him susceptible to Agag's flattery that Saul was his equal, though Saul was a new king and Agag was of an ancient lineage of kings. Agag has likely intimated that Saul is now part of a "brotherhood" of rulers, when really he feels nothing but contempt and hatred for him.

<sup>31</sup> Samuel reminded Saul that he'd had no right to lay claim to rule the tribes of Israel, and he did not put himself in power, but the Lord set him up for HIS purpose, not for Saul to serve his own.

<sup>32</sup> The Lord had also given Saul the ability to rule over Israel. He did not come by it naturally, though he had some giftings before then.

<sup>33</sup> He had to leave Israel's borders to carry out this task.

<sup>34</sup> Samuel reminded Saul that the Amalekites were a particularly wicked people. These were people who probably completely destroyed the innocence of their children when they were very young, to groom them to be fierce, implacable warriors and total slaves to their vile gods.

That is not at all far fetched. Even in modern times, there are certain factions who groom their children for violence against those whom they perceive as their enemies.

<sup>35</sup> He did not utterly consume them. The last band of Amalekites was destroyed in Hezekiah's time, and there still managed to escape, at that time, one who was of the royal lineage, probably the last living remnant of them, whose descendent rose up to trouble Israel in Esther's day.

I think that the survivor was probably a baby, for a child could escape notice, and that he was taken away by a friend from a different tribe, to be raised among nobles of a different nation, one in the east, perhaps in Assyria or Babylon. Those people sometimes raised the heir of other royal houses, with the parents' consent, in order to indoctrinate him with the religion of Mystery Babylon.

The remaining Amalekites probably deliberately stayed to fight to the last man and woman, along with their children, in order to cover the heir's escape and trick the Israelites into thinking that they had finally killed all of them. They knew that Israel would not rest, until they thought that they were all dead, because of the ancient command against their tribe, and the revival of righteousness in Hezekiah's reign.

<sup>36</sup> Saul did not even hesitate to take the spoil. He considered it his right for his hard work in laying siege to Auaris and overcoming it, and for all the other battles where he had fought the Amalekites, without taking any reward. It was inconvenient for him before; he had to keep on the move, but now that he had brought down the stronghold,

**20 And Saul said unto Samuel, But 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.<sup>37</sup>**

**21 But the people took of the spoil,<sup>38</sup> sheep and oxen, the firstfruits of the anathema, to sacrifice them unto the LORD thy<sup>39</sup> God in Gilgal.**

**22 And Samuel said, Does the LORD have as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in hearing the voice of the LORD?<sup>40</sup> Behold, to hear is better than sacrifice<sup>41</sup> and to hearken than the fat of rams.<sup>42</sup>**

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he figured he could go home. There were either some who had escaped from Auaris, or roaming bands of Amalekites that needed to be tracked down. He may have been fighting them for years, but it wasn't time to go home, yet.

Saul and his men had won a major victory and they figured it was time to party. They set themselves up a monument at Carmel to congratulate themselves and then headed to Gilgal for a feast.

It could be that the monument at Carmel, where Nadab lived, influenced him to be of a mind that was contrary to the Lord. It was there for him to see as often as he passed by, and reminded him of the deliverance from the Amalekites that Saul had wrought, which was a relief to all the inhabitants of the south. Yes, Saul wanted these people to remember him with gratitude. Nadab placed a higher value on the prosperity and comfort he received through not having to deal with Amalekite raiders, than on the word of the Lord which stated that David was God's choice of the next king.

<sup>37</sup> Saul's persistence in lying, denying the obvious facts, is really astounding. He wants to disobey, without suffering consequences, and he thinks that he should be relieved of negative consequences because he partially obeyed. This story should prompt some intense heart-searching, to see if there is anything of Saul's attitude in our own hearts, and to get rid of it, lest we end up like Saul – in Hell. The Bible makes it obvious that he went there, for God said to David, of Solomon, that He would not take His mercy from him, as he did from Saul.

Consider how wicked it was of Solomon to actually allow idols to be set up in Israel, and compare that to how Saul killed all the witches that he could find. Regardless of Saul's zeal in some things, this sin of Saul's of being untruthful to the Lord's prophet when he was put on the spot is very serious indeed.

He had three major downfalls that proved very decisive in his condemnation: he presumed to do sacred duties that were not his right; he did not do all that God told him to in regards to a very serious matter, and he lied to the man of God about it; he turned to satan for access to Samuel when he could no longer hear from God. Presumption – dishonesty - sorcery; a path to Hell. Meekness and honesty will help us hear God, and help us stay away from satanic methods to gain power, protection, provision, etc.

<sup>38</sup> A ruler's job is to restrain his people from doing evil.

<sup>39</sup> Saul's association with Agag is showing its effect. He doesn't own that God is his God; he recognizes that He is Samuel's God and thinks that Samuel should be pleased that the animals will be sacrificed to the Lord here at Gilgal, though they should have been completely destroyed at Auaris and left there to bloat and rot.

<sup>40</sup> The Lord has great delight in those who love what He loves and care about what He thinks, who make God's standard the rule for their behaviour, rather than to adhere to the compromised values of man.

<sup>41</sup> To hear means to hearken, not to hear and ignore, or to stifle that still, small voice of conviction and direction. And when we hear God's reproof, we must not try to justify our wrong actions or attitudes. We must let the shame sink in and do us some good. Godly shame, that is; the kind that motivates us to change, not the kind that burdens us with condemnation.



**23 For rebellion is the sin of witchcraft,<sup>43</sup> and to break the word of the Lord<sup>44</sup> is iniquity<sup>45</sup> and idolatry.<sup>46</sup> Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected thee from being king.<sup>47</sup>**

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<sup>42</sup> This is a prophetic utterance that indicates that some day, animal sacrifice will no longer be necessary, as the Messiah will have offered Himself up, and it will be a blessing to God's heart for people to have received Jesus as their Saviour, and just hear and obey Him, without any religious pomp and ceremony.

It may also be viewed to mean that it's better to obey God, than to have to offer up a sacrifice to make propitiation for sins. Nobody, however, except Jesus, was ever so perfectly sinless as not need redemption.

<sup>43</sup> Witchcraft is rebellion against God. It taps into demonic power as a means of gaining one's self-centred goals, instead of waiting on God to find out His will and acquire the power to do it. So, even if a person is not tapping into the occult to gain power, if they are in rebellion against God, what they are doing is akin to witchcraft.

To the Hebrews, witchcraft was divination. Samuel seems to be foretelling what Saul will eventually do, that will cause God to remove His mercy from him entirely. He eventually went to a medium, whom his officers had known about and left alive, though most of the others had been killed by Saul's order. This medium was probably very adept and the officers likely consulted her themselves.

<sup>44</sup> This phrase is rendered in other translations as stubbornness. To keep the word of the Lord is submission; to resist it is stubbornness, an unbending of the will to its own detriment. Saul only partially bent to the command to wipe out Amalek. He might not have even wanted to take them on, but it was part of why God made him the king of Israel; it came with the job. The countries needed to be freed from the Amalekite yoke.

Saul must have figured he did a good enough job. The empire was broken up. But, there were still at least one band of Amalekites on the loose, who kept their Egyptian slaves and destroyed Ziklag and other places in the south. Saul probably wasn't worried much about them, though, when that happened, as anything that was troublesome to Judah, David's tribe, he would have considered useful to himself. Nonetheless, Judah was one of the tribes of Israel and he should have been looking out for it, as well.

<sup>45</sup> Iniquity is the sin of the thoughts and the heart. If a person sins outright, it tends to lead to break down their moral fibre, and lead to more sinful attitudes and thoughts that eventually seek expression. This is why we must ponder the issues of our heart and change the direction we are headed, if it is not in the right direction.

<sup>46</sup> All idolatry boils down to the worship of Self. A person doesn't need to have a physical statue to prostrate themselves to, to qualify as an idolater. They just need to place their own personal comforts and goals higher than God's will for them.

The word used for idolatry means teraphim, the household gods that supposedly brought good luck to a house. It is obvious by Samuel's statement that Israelites were forbidden to have these idols in their homes, but Saul's household, that should have been a sterling example to the rest of Israel, was influenced by his self-will.

Michal kept teraphim and used them as bolsters to fool the Saul's soldiers into thinking that David was ill in bed, when they came to arrest him. She used these idols because she thought she would have good luck in fooling the soldiers, that there was power in them. David probably did not know that she had these things in their house, just as Rachel was able to conceal her father's teraphim from Jacob.

<sup>47</sup> We reap what we sow. Saul may have been rejecting God's counsel in incremental ways with little injustices and indulgences here and there, until it finally culminated in a major act of disobedience.

**24 ¶ Then Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned;<sup>48</sup> for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and thy words because I feared the people and consented unto their voice.<sup>49</sup>**

**25 Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin<sup>50</sup> and turn again with me that I may worship the LORD.<sup>51</sup>**

**26 And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected thee from being king over Israel.<sup>52</sup>**

**27 And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle<sup>53</sup>, and it rent.<sup>54</sup>**

**28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD has rent the kingdom of Israel from thee today and has given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou.<sup>55</sup>**

**29 And also the Overcomer of Israel<sup>56</sup> will not lie nor repent concerning this, for he is not a man, that he should repent.<sup>57</sup>**

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<sup>48</sup>An insincere statement. It is followed with blaming others for his error, and it is a lie. He was not afraid of the people. By now, he has their reins firmly in hand and they will do whatever he says, short of killing innocent men, such as Jonathan, or the priests of Nob and their families. He could find a mercenary who would do the latter, though.

<sup>49</sup>When a controller fears the people and consents to them, it is so that they can call in favours at a later date. What they are afraid of is losing influence, but when people compromise their integrity, that is when they lose influence. They may lose influence over evil people who have the capability of doing evil things for them, but they will gain more influence with good people who can benefit them in good ways. They also lose their ability to turn evil people towards goodness.

<sup>50</sup>Saul isn't taking this very seriously yet. He is still rejecting the word of the Lord by rejecting God's judgment on him for his sin.

<sup>51</sup>Saul doesn't take worship of the Lord any further than physical activities of making sacrifices and bowing. True worship is of the heart, which is the kind of worship that David rendered to the Lord.

<sup>52</sup>Saul got off easy. When Achor kept some of the spoil that was to be wholly devoted to the Lord, he and his whole family were immediately stoned to death.

<sup>53</sup>If Saul tore the skirt of Samuel's garment, it may be that he had dropped down on his knees to plead with Samuel. This conversation probably occurred out of sight of his troops.

<sup>54</sup>A prophetic sign that visually drove home to Saul the results of what he had done.

<sup>55</sup>God's favour has already been transferred to someone else whom He had chosen to be king. That must have hit Saul's heart like a knife, to know that someone was out there who was going to take over his throne, but he didn't know who. Rabbis have pointed out that, later on, when David cut off a piece of the skirt of Saul's robe, this confirmed to Saul that David was the man God had given his kingdom to.

<sup>56</sup>God is the Champion of Israel. It is through Him that victory is won in battle. He was not going to change His mind about replacing Saul's lineage, because it was for Israel's good.

Jonathan was a godly man, but the challenges of king might have been more than what he could have handled, and still kept his salvation. It may be that Saul's compromising would have affected Jonathan at a later date. God sometimes cuts off a righteous person's life to prevent them from being tempted above their endurance.

Also, Mephibosheth would not have been a good king. He had a weak character. He was at the mercy of others; he did not know how to rise above his handicap to assert himself, and there was probably some truth to the

**30 Then he said, I have sinned;<sup>58</sup> yet honour me now,<sup>59</sup> I pray thee, before the elders of my people and before Israel<sup>60</sup> and turn again with me that I may worship the LORD thy God.<sup>61</sup>**

**31 So Samuel turned again after Saul,<sup>62</sup> and Saul worshipped the LORD.**

**32 ¶ Then Samuel said, Bring me Agag, the king of Amalek. And Agag came unto him delicately.<sup>63</sup> And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is near.<sup>64</sup>**

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allegation that he would have tried to take advantage of David's situation to steal the throne that God had given to David, irrespective of the kindness that David had shown him.

<sup>57</sup> Samuel warns Saul that the judgment is final; he cannot persuade God to rescind it. God does what is best for all concerned based on His knowledge, not on His emotions. He may feel great pity for those whom He judges, but His pity will not make Him withdraw judgment, unless those He judges have a sincere change of heart. And even then, He may not change the sentence, but He will cause it to work in the person's favour in some way.

<sup>58</sup> There was no more genuine repentance in this confession than in Pharaoh's, when he said, "I and my people are evil." There was only a shrinking from punishment, not an abhorrence of the sin.

<sup>59</sup> If Saul had truly repented, he would be willing to be a public example to his people, that they would be turned away from falling into his errors. But, rather, he wants to have all of his majesty reserved, their admiration of him left intact.

This reminds me of when Kathryn Kuhlman was no longer filled with the Holy Ghost and moving in power, as previously, and her eyes pleaded with Jamie Buckingham to pretend to fall under the power of God when she laid hands on him, though he felt nothing when she prayed for him. He went along with the pretence, but his conscience made him mention it in her biography.

If a person's relationship to the Lord matters to them more than anything else, if they have fallen into sin, they should be willing to give up their public ministry, in order to spend a quantity of quality time with the Lord to get themselves straightened out. What sensible person cares what the public thinks of them, if their immortal soul is in jeopardy?

<sup>60</sup> Saul does not want the people to know that he and Samuel had a serious falling-out, and that Samuel no longer considers him a godly king, but rather one who is just filling a secular office until God is ready to move another into his place who will be a man after His own heart.

<sup>61</sup> Again Saul attests that Jehovah is Samuel's God, not his, but he wishes to make a public pretence of worshipping Him, as it is the religion of the people whom He rules. At least, it is the religion of the common people; there is evidence that his daughter and some of his officers are not devout servants of Jehovah.

He may also have wanted to petition God to change His mind, regardless of what Samuel said about how it wasn't going to happen. He didn't want to worship God to accept the judgment and submit to Him. It is evident by his actions that he never did that. If Saul had accepted God's judgment, he would have transferred the throne to David in his lifetime, instead of harassing David. At the very least, he would have kept David at court in a high position and made him the general of his generals, and done whatever he could to ensure a smooth transfer of the throne to David upon his death.

<sup>62</sup> Part of Samuel's motivation for acceding to Saul's pleas, in spite of his initial refusal, was that there was unfinished business. He had to make sure that Agag was disposed of. Also, though God had chosen another to take Saul's place, David was not yet ready to be king. Saul had to continue to fill that place and, for the sake of the country, Samuel needed to make some show of support. Otherwise, many rebellions would have arisen and engendered chaos.

**33 And Samuel said, As thy sword has made women childless,<sup>65</sup> so shall thy mother be childless among women.<sup>66</sup> Then Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.<sup>67</sup>**

**34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.<sup>68</sup>**

**35 And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death;<sup>69</sup> nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul because the LORD had repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.<sup>70</sup>**

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<sup>63</sup> Agag walked tentatively, smiling timidly, pretending humility, trying to show himself as friendly and submissive, carefully watching Saul and Samuel for cues as to their mood and their thoughts, to see if there was a possibility of gaining their sympathy and a reprieve from death. I think that he was planning to escape and regroup, to bring terrible forces down on Israel in revenge and wipe them out. Agag wanted to enter in to "peace talks."

<sup>64</sup> I don't know why this was translated in the Jubilee Bible as near. It should be "past." Agag figured that the Israelites had indulged their bloodlust and had cooler heads now, as well as some time to recover from the grief of their losses in battle, enough to see some advantage in sparing his life. Russ Stendal, who put together the Jubilee Bible, is right in supposing that Agag was tentative because he sensed that death is near, but Agag wouldn't have said that out loud to his enemies. He would have tried to placate them.

<sup>65</sup> There is an implication of murder. Agag has killed, not just in war, but for whims and thrills, and retribution has now come. He did not die simply because of the edict against his race, but also for his own evils.

<sup>66</sup> This seems to indicate that the king's mother was still alive, possibly in some city that Saul had not yet attacked. Saul did not wipe out all the Amalekites. He just broke their hold. David fought them after they raided Ziklag. They attacked the south of Israel again when Saul was busy fighting the Philistines, and David was expected to be at that battle, as well.

<sup>67</sup> Samuel vented his fury on Agag for his cunning deception of Saul, for having played on Saul's vanity and insecurity to extend his life. He was also demonstrating to the Israelites to show this tribe no mercy, but to utterly exterminate them in obedience to God's command. He didn't make any ceremony out of killing him. He just got it done, before Agag could attempt any escape, and he made sure that he was dead.

<sup>68</sup> Samuel and Saul lived only a few miles apart, so the fact that Samuel did not go to Saul anymore demonstrated that he avoided him, and Saul probably stayed away from Ramah, for if he went there, it would be expected that Samuel would attend on him. Saul knew that Samuel would not do so, and it was best to steer clear of Ramah to avoid an embarrassing situation. There was possibly only one time Saul went there after this, and it was when he had the intention of killing Samuel.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel didn't waste his time with someone who wasn't interested in listening. When Saul and Samuel met again, it was because Saul was seeking Samuel.

<sup>70</sup> Righteous people do not rejoice in the downfall of others.