

KILL YOUR AGAG

1 Sam. 15

THIS GREAT OT story is meant to teach us the seriousness of sin and the righteousness of God's holy wrath against it.

Samuel instructs Saul

This was a message from the spiritual leader of Israel to the political and military leader of Israel. The message was clear: ***Go and attack the Amalekites, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them.***

The judgment Israel was to bring against Amalek was to be complete: ***Kill man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.*** God clearly told Samuel to tell Saul to bring a total judgment against the Amalekites, sparing none.

Who were the Amalekites? What did the Amalekites do that was so bad?

They were ancient, nomadic people. They were descendants of Esau, the godless son of Isaac. They occupied southern Canaan. Hundreds of years before, the LORD said He would bring this kind of judgment against Amalek. ***I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven*** (Exodus 17:14).

The Amalekites committed a terrible sin against Israel. When the nation was coming out of Egypt, they attacked from behind. Attacking the weakest and most vulnerable of the nation. They did this with no provocation, no reason except for violence and greed.

God hates it when the strong take cruel advantage over the weak, especially when the weak are His people. So God promised to bring judgment against those war-mongers, called the Amalekites. They were fierce, evil, ruthless, vicious people, who hated God and the holy things of God. They God's anger intensely burned against them.

But all this had happened more than four hundred years before! Why did God hold it against the Amalekites?

This shows us an important principle: time does not erase sin before God. ***Sin will find you out, sooner or later*** (Num.32:23). In fact, the 400 years of time was time that the Amalekites were mercifully given as an opportunity to repent. And they did not repent! The hundreds of years of hardened unrepentant hearts made them guiltier, not less guilty! Their cup of iniquity was now full.

Saul attacks the Amalekites.

Saul's attack was good, and in obedience to the LORD. But it was selective, incomplete obedience. Saul and the people spared Agag, the king, 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.

God commanded Saul to bring His judgment on all the people, including the king. The people and livestock were under a curse. Under a ban. They were to be devoted to the Lord for destruction.

These were to be "Yahweh's holy wars." No hostages or spoils were permitted. Saul spared, when he was told not to spare. That was grave violation of the Lord's holy command. He got only part of the mission done. He did what he thought was right, in his own eyes.

- **Partial obedience is complete disobedience.** Saul and his men obeyed as far as suited them; that is to say, they did not obey God at all. They carried out their own inclinations, both in sparing the good and destroying the worthless. You are either for the Lord or against the Lord; no one can hold "middle ground" with God. Half way obedience is no obedience at all.
- **Saul should have killed Agag. In sparing his life, he is a picture of the believer who spares things in his life that are harmful to his own soul.** Throughout the Bible, Amalek stands

for the flesh. To spare the best of Amalek is equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some evil habit, or some favourite sin in our life.

A believer is called to kill his Agags. To kill the sin of drinking in his life . To the sin kill of pornography in his life. To kill the sin of gambling. To kill the sin of stealing. To kill the sin of lying. To kill the sin of laziness. To kill whatever besetting sin he's guilty of keeping alive.

To walk in Christ's victory, to walk in the Spirit, to walk as not to fulfill the lust of the flesh, we are to starve the flesh. To make no provision for the flesh, but rather feed our Spirit.

Romans 8:13— ***tells us to put to death the misdeeds of the body.***

Col. 3:5— ***Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. These are all things of the flesh.***

Kill them. Put them to death. Don't do it partially; don't do half-heartily. *To spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to excuse our failures, and to disregard our besetting sin* (F. B. Meyer)."

We should never allow Agags to remain in our lives. It will cost dearly, if we do. Our Agags will turn us and seek to destroy us.

Sin is not killed, when it is merely covered up. Successfully covering your sin doesn't kill your sin, it makes it even more live because it's not exposed; its hiding (John MacArthur).

Prov. 28:13—***He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper. But, he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.***"

God's word to Samuel.

The LORD came to Samuel, saying, ***"I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments."***

And it also grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the LORD all night. Samuel shows that he has God's heart. It hurt God to reject Saul, and it hurt God's prophet to see him rejected. We are close to God's heart when the things that grieve Him grieve us, and the things that please God please us.

The man who started out humble and submissive to God was now boldly going his own way in disobedience to God. In the previous chapter, because of impatience, He disobeyed God by assuming the priestly role by sacrificing a burnt offering because Samuel wasn't showing up. He was marked for rejection. In this chapter and story, he is given a second chance. And he burns it! He will lose the kingdom for good.

Saul greets Samuel.

So when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, ***"Saul went to Carmel, and indeed, he set up a monument for himself."*** Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, ***"Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."***

Was Saul grieved over his sin? Not at all. Instead, he set up a monument for himself. Saul was pleased with himself! He felt he had done something good, and he believed he was totally justified in what he had done. There is not the slightest bit of shame or guilt in Saul.

He set up a monument for himself also shows that Saul is not the same humble man who once said, ***"I am from the least of the clans of Israel"*** (1 Samuel 9:21) and who once hid among the baggage, out of shyness (1 Samuel 10:22). The few years in power, the military victories, and prestige of the throne of Israel have all revealed the pride in Saul's heart.

- **We can start well, and finish poorly.** We start humbly, and gradually become prideful. Saul in a short time, in his second

year as king of the nation, he broke under the pressure of leadership.

Whether we serve in leadership or not, we must be continually be on our guard. We will be tested by the Lord in the sphere of obedience, to see if we will neglect, or deem some of the Lord's commandments of little or no importance.

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word (Isaiah 66:2).

Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it (Luke 11:28). Don't expect and blessing from God if you chose not to obey.

- **Pride always leads us into self-deception.** This happens when having disobeyed God, partially or completely, we all along think we are doing pretty well for Him. It's that this very juncture we begin building monuments for us. We dangerously seek honour for ourselves, falsely believing that we are in God's will.

Saul said to Samuel, ***"Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD."*** How could Saul do this? How could he come to the prophet of God with such boldness, such confidence, and boast of his obedience? Because of his pride, Saul is self-deceived.

The charge against Saul

Saul was thrilled with his success. But Samuel said, ***"What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"*** And Saul said, ***"They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."***

Samuel is saying that the sheep and oxen are speaking and testifying to your disobedience. Saul's defence and excuse are revealing. He desperately tries to excuse his sin by word games and half-truths.

- **First, he blames the people, not himself** (They have brought them ... the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen). He struggles to take responsibility for his own sin. Besides, if the Lord says something is condemned, how can we say, it is the best? Woe, to those who call evil good and good evil.
- **Second, he includes himself in the obedience.....**the rest we have utterly destroyed.
- **Third, he claims to have done it for a spiritual reason.....**to sacrifice to the LORD your God. This was nothing but a "religious cloak" to sin.

How crazy it would be, to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord of which He had already claimed as his own. To steal from God in order to give to God is the greatest absurdity imaginable.

In his feeble defence and excuse, Saul reveals the real problem: he had a poor relationship with God. Notice how he speaks of God to Samuel: ***"to sacrifice to the LORD your God."*** In his pride, Saul has removed the LORD God from the throne of his heart. Therefore God is going to remove him from Israel's throne.

When Saul said, ***"The rest we have utterly destroyed": As it turned out, this was an outright lie.*** Saul, in fact, did not even do what he said he did. There were still Amalekites he left alive. David later had to deal with the Amalekites (1 Samuel 27:8, 30:1, 2 Samuel 8:12).

Haman, the evil man who tried to wipe out all the Jewish people in the days of Esther, was in fact a descendant of Agag! (Esther 3:1).

When we don't obey God completely, the "left over" portion will surely come back and trouble us, if not kill us! Kill Agag, or he will live to wound you, even kill you. Most ironic of all, when Saul killed

himself on battle field, and the Philistines stripped him of his armour, they cut his head off.

Samuel said to Saul, **"Stop"**, in other words *"Shut Up!"* Samuel has had enough. He will not listen to Saul any longer. Too many excuses; too many lies. And no true repentance before the Lord. What Saul possessed was false humility. Now it is time for Saul to be quiet, and to listen to the word of the LORD through Samuel.

Saul is rejected as king

Then Samuel said: ***"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. 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."***

Religious observance without obedience is empty before God. Its hypocrisy! The best sacrificial offering we could bring to God is a repentant heart (Psalm 51:16-17), and our bodies surrendered to His service for obedience (Romans 12:1).

One could make a thousand sacrifices unto God; work a thousand hours for God's service; or give millions of dollars to His work. But all of those sacrifices mean nothing unless there is a surrendered heart to God through Christ.

Luther used to say, *"I had rather be obedient, than able to work miracles."*

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: A rebellious, stubborn heart rejects God just as someone rejects God by occult practices or idolatry.

Rebellion equals self-will. Self-will essentially equals service to demons.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king. In his empty religious practice, rebellion, and stubbornness against God, Saul was rejecting God's word. So God rightly rejected him as king over Israel. But it would be another 25 years before David would be enthroned in Israel.

Saul's weak attempt to repent.

Then Saul said to Samuel, ***"I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."***

Saul's statement begins like a genuine confession, reflecting a repentant heart. But that changes as he continues: ***because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.*** In this, Saul refuses to own up to his sin; instead he blames the people who "made him" do it.

He feared the people more than he feared God. That's big trap! He was a man pleaser. Sadly, that's exactly what most of our political leaders are like. And also some church leaders and members are like.

If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ (Gal .1:10).

Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD. Instead of dealing with the deep issue of his heart of rebellion and stubbornness against God, Saul thinks that with a word from Samuel, everything can be fixed. But a word or two from the prophet Samuel will not change the settled nature of Saul's heart.

A simple "please pardon my sin" would not do when one's heart is settled in rebellion and sin against the LORD.

In Vs 30 again Saul says ***"I have sinnedbut please, pretty please, honour me before the elders."*** He wasn't concerned at all about having offended God by violating His holy law. He's only concerned about the consequence of sin and his face and reputation. He wants

the people to think he has repented. But never turned to God with godly sorrow. He only turned to Samuel with religious words.

God's rejection of Saul as king over Israel is final.

But Samuel said to Saul, ***"I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." And as Samuel turned around to go away, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you.***

Samuel carries out God's will.

Then Samuel said, ***"Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me."*** So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, ***"Surely the bitterness of death is past."*** Agag arrived all full of smiles, for he thought "surely the worst is over and I have been spared."

But Samuel said, ***"As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women."*** And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. Samuel finished the job!

The tragic split between Samuel and Saul.

And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death: Samuel knew that it wasn't his place to see Saul. It was Saul's place to come to him in humble repentance before the LORD. If he did, the kingdom would not be restored to him; it was promised to David, but it could have restored his heart before God.

But Saul never came to see Samuel.

Saul's flaws – an inability to trust God and an unwillingness to obey Him— led the Lord to reject him. Saul would suffer from deepening depression and paranoia. He would grow intensely jealous of David. He pursued David throughout his life and frequently tried to kill him.

He ordered the murder of 85 priests of the Lord, while hunting David in the city of Nob. He consulted a witch in Endor, because God would no longer speak to him. And to his shock surprise, Samuel appeared from the realm of the death, and told him he would die in battle, with his 3 sons, the next day.

And so it was that Saul committed suicide in battle!