

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 28TH-29TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

COMPLETE DESTRUCTION (1 SAMUEL 15:1-9) A CHANCE TO BE RESTORED

After some selfish and foolish mistakes, Saul is given another chance to submit to God's will and truly lead. So why is Saul given another opportunity at restoration when it has already been proclaimed that his authority is ending?

- Here we see **the complicated blend of pre-destination and our free will.**

SOME THINGS ARE HARDER TO UNDERSTAND

Saul's test would be tough but clear: fulfill the prophesy of Exodus 17 and Deuteronomy 25 by completely destroying the Amalekites.

- **Parts of the Bible require thorough historical study, keen knowledge of God's character, and trust because they can easily be taken out of context.**

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THIS COMMAND

The Amalekites: A nomadic tribe and the first people to attack the Jews after the exodus. Known for **extreme brutality to the Jews, especially women and children** (Deuteronomy 25:18).

- The Amalekites worshiped Baal. Baal worship included **human sacrifice** (often children), **prostitution, rape, and extreme self-harm.**

A "HOLY WAR"

Biblically speaking, "holy wars" were only to be taken out on people whom God had chosen to pour out His most severe judgment. In these cases, everything was to be devoted to God and destroyed.

- Though hard to understand, God called for the complete annihilation of the Amalekites.

THINKING WE KNOW BETTER THAN GOD

Saul did attack the evil Amalekites, but he thought taking the "best" plunder and sparing Agag would strengthen his image.

- **We don't have to understand everything about God; we just have to obey. When we start to think we are smarter than God, we are destined for trouble.**

SELF-CENTERED (1 SAMUEL 15:10-21) HOW CAN GOD "REGRET" SOMETHING?

In v10, God says, "I regret that I made Saul king." This is different from human regret.

- God's "regret" is His lamenting a situation He enacted. **God knew what needed to happen to teach a long-term lesson to humanity, but like a good parent, He did not enjoy punishing His "child."**

SIN SHOULD ANGER US

Though God knew what would happen, it is important to remember that Saul chose to turn from following God. His selfish pursuit made Sam angry, and he "cried out" to God.

- **Sin should trouble us because it hurts those who choose it over God, and it will inevitably hurt and mislead others.**

ARROGANCE SHOULD ALSO REPULSE US

After choosing to do things his way, Saul builds a monument to himself and blames his soldiers for not killing the plunder, showing he is oblivious and self-absorbed.

- **Arrogance distorts our ability to discern God's will and how we are to live. We also blame-shift and avoid responsibility.**

SELF-CENTEREDNESS PUSHES GOD AWAY (JAMES 4:6)

Notice that Saul refers to God as "your God" two times in this section as he tries to convince Sam that he did what God wanted.

- **Perhaps in Saul's arrogance, he thought he could improve on God's plans and tweak them to better suit himself. Do we foolishly try this as well?**

THE DANGER OF FORGETTING WHERE WE CAME FROM

Sam reminds Saul of where he was and how far God had taken him because Saul had forgotten the provision and grace of God.

- **Though God relieves the pain of the past, we should pray that we never forget how far Jesus has brought us because it keeps us humble and close to Him!**

LIKE WITCHCRAFT? (1 SAMUEL 15:22-23)

"LOOK: TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE"

After Saul brags about the sacrifices for Sam's God, Sam tells him that **God desires consistent obedience more than periodic sacrifice.**

- **Many only obey, give, pay attention, and sacrifice during times of excess or need. This isn't a relationship and sacrifices without obedience are useless.**

"LIKE THE SIN OF DIVINATION"?

Divination is the occult practice of doing rituals in order to see into the future or obtain blessings and is condemned in the Bible.

- **When we think we can periodically sacrifice things and get God to bless us and do our bidding, we are acting in the same vein as witchcraft.**

"DEFIANCE IS LIKE...IDOLATRY"

When we live in defiance of God, we are, in essence, elevating ourselves as gods because we think we are above submission.

- **In our defiance, we will be rejected by God like Saul. Not because He doesn't love us but because our eternity is an extension of what we want in this life.**

FINISHED (1 SAMUEL 15:24-35)

"BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE..."

Saul admits he was more concerned about what people thought of him than obeying God. He seems to not truly repent because he wants Saul to return with him in order to save face.

- **The affirmation of people has become an addiction in our society, and it will assuredly draw us away from God!**

A CONSISTENT GOD

God knew Saul wouldn't repent and change. So, Saul's throne will be given to another. Sam also says **God "does not lie or change His mind" like humans do.**

- This speaks more to the nature of God than a specific situation. **God is faithful, and if we humble ourselves, things can change.**

FINISHING THE COMMAND

The "hacking" of Agag by Samuel is a gruesome and somewhat hard-to-understand account in the Bible without some study.

- Agag was a vicious murderer/terrorist, and the job of governmental authority was to execute judgment on threats to innocent people (Romans 13:1-4).
- Leviticus 6:4 teaches that anything wrongfully taken has to be returned to be forgiven by God. Agag was to be judged via complete annihilation of his people, but Saul failed to enact justice.
- Sam had to complete the task of killing Agag because **God will not let evil against innocent people go unaccounted for.**

"SAMUEL NEVER SAW SAUL AGAIN"

Sam mourned for Saul because he knew the state of his heart and what that meant for his future. God also "regretted" (mourned) what would become of Saul.

- **There are times we need to walk away from places, things, and people, but we still need to "mourn" and pray for them.**

EVIL HAS TO BE COMPLETELY REMOVED

- The story of Saul and the Amalekites teaches us that **we must be obedient to God, and any evil in us has to be repented of and completely removed.**
- If we fail to remove evil in or around us, we will eventually fall to it and do damage. If we never address it, the damage will be eternal.

GOD RESISTS SELFISHNESS

- We learned that **God not only pushes away from self-centered people, but selfishness yields God-implemented consequences** to humble us and protect others.
- Selfishness also distorts our ability to discern God's will and know truth because our eyes are only on us.

OBEDIENCE OVER SACRIFICE

- Samuel and Jesus (Matthew 9:13) both teach us that **consistent obedience is better than occasional sacrifice.**
- Do we truly have a relationship with God, or **do we only make "sacrifices" when we are in need or have excess? Do we understand that this is similar to witchcraft?**

WHOSE APPROVAL ARE WE SEEKING?

- One of the biggest problems today is the addiction to the affirmation of other people instead of seeking God's approval.
- **If we worry more about people's opinions over God's, we will gravitate away from Him and forfeit salvation, peace, and contentment because we've rejected truth.**

AN HONEST INVENTORY

- Is there any unaddressed sin in our hearts? Do we understand that it will catch up to us? (Numbers 32:23)
- Are we deliberately working on humility?
- Do we live in consistent obedience to God or just make periodic sacrifices?
- Whose approval do we value the most?