

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

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

JUDGMENT OF A NATION (1 SAMUEL 15:1-3)

Passages like these are difficult for most of us—many unbelievers use them as a reason not to believe and trust God, and many of us as believers wrestle and struggle with texts like this.

- Why would God command wholesale genocide of an entire people group (the Amalekites)?
- This seems to be shocking, disturbing, violent, and absolutely psychopathic behavior from the God of the Bible.

1. A HISTORY BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE AMALEKITES:

Verse two says that God witnessed all the Amalekites did to Israel—throughout the OT, there were several violent, persistent, bloody, and unprovoked attacks against Israel.

- This group desired nothing less than to wipe out the people of God entirely, and they wouldn't stop until they achieved their own goal of total genocide against the Jewish people (Esth. 9).
- God's covenant with the Jewish people includes the promise, "I will curse him who curses you" (Gen. 12:3, NKJV).
- Nations like the Amalekites who wanted to exterminate the Jewish people weren't just waging war on Israel; they were declaring war on Almighty God and His plan of redemption for the entire world (bloodline of Jesus).

2. THE AMALEKITES HAD BEEN GIVEN A LOT OF TIME.

For over 300 years, the Amalekites relentlessly attacked and assaulted Israel.

- This nation's unrelenting brutality towards Israel had been going on for a long time. Yet, God, in His mercy and longsuffering, gave them three centuries before He proclaimed His judgment against them through Saul.

3. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN ARE OFTEN FAR MORE WIDESPREAD THAN WE EVEN KNOW.

Nobody sins in a vacuum—the sin of humanity always affects innocent people.

- Women, children, elderly, and disabled people have always been the victims of societal evil when that evil becomes rampant and widespread (50-55 million civilians died in WW2).

4. GOD IS A GOD OF JUDGMENT---THERE ARE GREATER, MORE WIDESPREAD JUDGMENTS IN THE OT, AND THERE IS A GREATER, MORE WIDESPREAD JUDGMENT COMING.

The flood of Noah (Genesis 6) is a far greater genocide than what's commanded in this passage!

- Noah's flood isn't a fairy tale or children's story, it's the story of God's total judgment against the wickedness and depravity of the human race.
- The final judgment against humanity in the book of Revelation is so violent and widespread the blood that's spilled is described as coming up to a horse's bridle (Rev. 14:14-20).
- Judgment day will be far greater than Noah's flood and any of God's judgments in Scripture.

5. THE WRATH OF GOD'S JUDGMENT TOWARDS US WAS SATISFIED IN THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Humanity is fallen, and with that fall comes God's righteous judgment.

- God, in His mercy, took that judgment upon Himself on the cross when Jesus died.
- The cross doesn't mean that NT God became soft and now winks at sin. On the contrary, God's judgment towards those who refuse to repent and trust Christ will now be more severe (Rom. 3:21-26).

WHEN GOD'S COMMANDS DON'T MAKE SENSE.

The real crux of the issue is this—how do we respond when God's Word or His actions and character don't seem right or make sense to us in our limited humanity?

- Will we, as finite human beings, place God on trial for appearing merciless and cruel? *Where did we even get our standard for mercy and kindness?*
- Will Saul obey God's Word? Or will he compromise?

DISOBEYING GOD (1 SAMUEL 15:4-11)

Saul prepared his army for an attack on the Amalekites (vs. 4-5).

- One admirable thing Saul does is that he allows a people called the Kenites to escape since they were friends with Israel and God's judgment was not on them (vs. 6).
- Saul and his army attacked the Amalekites in obedience to God's word, but it was selective and partial obedience (vs. 7).

Saul destroyed all the Amalekites, but he captured their king, Agag (vs. 8). This wasn't an act of mercy; it was an attempt to boost Saul's personal status as king.

- In those days, conquering kings frequently paraded all the other kings they'd conquered in chains to show off their military strength and prowess. This was Saul's attempt to make this war all about himself.

Saul and his men kept the best livestock for themselves while they destroyed all the worthless and unwanted things (vs. 9).

- God had specifically commanded that Israel's war of judgment against Amalek was not to be a war of conquest.
- Yet, Saul and his troops can't seem to help themselves—the spoil of war and the temptation of prestige are all too much.

Saul partially obeys God. He destroys most of the people and a lot of the livestock, but he's selective and partial with what he obeys.

- Saul only obeys the portions of God's Word that make sense to him, that don't personally inconvenience him, and don't interfere with his own personal priorities.
- What a sad picture of a delusional and self-deceived religious hypocrite.

The word of the Lord came to Samuel about Saul's disobedience (vs. 10).

- God "regretted" that He made Saul king. Meaning God felt the pain of the current situation, and it hurt Him (vs. 11).
- It's NOT that God was unaware of what would happen when Saul became king and now wished He could go back in time and make a different decision (see verse 29).

It's that God is grieved, and He hurts when we deliberately disobey His Word and then pretend as if we haven't because our disobedience is partial and selective.

- It's even worse when we mask our disobedience with religion and behave as if we're still on

good terms with God because of our religious observance. God sees our hearts, and He sees right through our excuses.

TO OBEY IS BETTER (1 SAMUEL 15:12-23)

Saul's actions angered and grieved Samuel, and he prayed and cried out to the Lord all night.

- Early the next morning, Samuel went to find Saul and confront him (vs. 12).
- To make the situation even worse, Saul had set up a monument for himself—he wasn't the least bit grieved or convicted over his sin; as a matter of fact, he was proud of his supposed accomplishments!

When Samuel finally reached Saul, Saul greeted him and proclaimed that he'd carried out the Lord's instructions (vs. 13).

- This was a lie—Saul had been partial, selective, and incomplete in his obedience.
- Samuel responds by asking Saul, if God told you to destroy all of the Amalekites and you did what God said to do, "then what is this sound of sheep, goats, and cattle I hear" (vs. 14).

Pride and self-deception are two very powerful blinding forces in our spiritual lives.

- We are masters at finding ways to justify our partial and selective obedience, and the sad part is that we often believe our own lies!
- The fruit of our own disobedience can be so obvious to others and God, yet we can somehow still lie to ourselves that we're walking in obedience and holiness.

SAUL'S EXCUSE FOR HIS DISOBEDIENCE IS FOUR-FOLD (VS. 15)

First, he blamed the troops, not himself.

- Secondly, he claimed that he had been obedient to most of God's commands ("...the rest we destroyed").
- Third, he gave a justification for why he disobeyed ("...we spared the best").
- Fourth, he claimed he made his decision for noble and spiritual reasons ("...to offer a sacrifice").

Samuel would have none of it—God revealed to Him everything that happened (vs. 16).

- God had taken unimportant Saul and made him king. So why did Saul fail to obey the Lord? Why did he do evil in God's sight? (vs. 17-19)
- Saul protested that he DID obey the Lord! Maybe he didn't follow the letter of the law, but his actions were just improvements or his own version of God's instructions (vs. 20-21).

God would not accept Saul's sacrifices because the Lord didn't have Saul's obedience (vs. 22).

- God doesn't want our monetary donations, acts of charity, volunteerism, grand gestures of good will, or emotional displays of worship as much as He wants our hearts to be obedient and surrendered to Him in everyday things.
- To obey is better than sacrifice! Sacrifice without obedience is hypocrisy.

A rebellious, stubborn heart that disobeys God but still tries to manipulate Him through grand gestures of religion is exactly like someone who practices witchcraft, divination, pagan idolatry, or sorcery (vs. 23).

- God's favor can't be bought or sold through our church attendance or religious observance—what He requires and desires from us is surrendered, humble obedience!

THE LORD HAS REJECTED (1 SAMUEL 15:24-35)

Saul finally admitted his sin and gave his true reason for disobedience: he was afraid of the people and feared them instead of God (vs. 24).

- Saul wanted things to be fixed by a simple apology and begged Samuel to come with him so he could worship God, and all would be well.
- Saul's repentance seems a bit superficial, and it was too little too late—God had rejected Saul as king over Israel (vs. 26).

As Samuel turned to leave Saul, Saul grabbed the corner of his robe, and it tore (vs. 27).

- The torn robe was an object lesson—just as the robe tore because Saul grasped it too tightly, so Saul's tight grip on pride, stubbornness, and his own prestige caused the kingdom to be taken from him (vs. 28).
- This was a final judgment God had pronounced—God doesn't lie or change His mind (vs. 29).

After God's judgment is announced on Saul, his greatest concern still seems to be saving face and maintaining his reputation rather than getting right with the Lord (vs. 30-31).

- Saul was more concerned with his image and standing before the elders of Israel than his very soul and his standing before God!
- When there is no real fear of God in our hearts, we will only care about how we appear to others.

The old prophet Samuel finishes the job that God gave Saul—he executes and violently butchers King Agag of Amalek before the Lord as a sign of God's judgment (vs. 32-33).

- Samuel went to his home in Ramah, and Saul left to his home in Gibeah (vs. 34), and the two never saw each other again (vs. 35).
- Samuel mourned Saul, and the Lord "regretted" Saul being king over Israel.

Saul's partial, selective, and incomplete obedience to God, all while he self-justified and excused his decisions because of his superficial religious observance, resulted in God rejecting him as king over Israel.

- There would be someone else God would anoint as king in Saul's place.
- The new king would be a man after God's own heart who would fear the Lord (1 Sam. 13:14).

TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.

- Is there a clear command of God or an instruction from Scripture that you struggle with or simply don't like or agree with?
- Often, we will only obey the portions of God's Word that make sense to us, that don't personally inconvenience us, and that don't interfere with our own personal priorities. Then we justify our disobedience in all manner of ways!

1. Abstain from all appearances of evil (1 Thess. 5:22).
 2. Love your enemies (Matt. 5:43-44).
 3. Honor rulers (1 Peter 2:17; Rom. 13:7).
 4. Be sexually pure and honor God with your body (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 5. Don't get intoxicated (Eph. 5:18).
 6. Don't use foul or corrupt language (Eph. 4:29).
 7. Make Disciples (Matt. 28:19-20).
- A man or woman who truly loves and fears the Lord will repent and obey if they're convicted by God about sin and disobedience (2 Sam. 12).
 - A man or woman who is rebellious, stubborn, and doesn't fear the Lord will simply continue justifying, downplaying, or excusing their own disobedience (1 Sam. 15).
 - Which one are you? David or Saul?