

1 Samuel 15 Commentary

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Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission
[1 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	

1 Chronicles 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36
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Legend: B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that **after the division** of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "**Judah**" and the Northern Kingdom as "**Israel**." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.

[The Ryrie Study Bible](#)

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Map on Left [ESV Global Study Bible](#), on right [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#)
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1 Samuel 15:1 Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, **listen to the words of the LORD.**

BGT 1 Samuel 15:1 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ πρ ς Σαουλ μ π στειλεν κ ριος χρ σα σε ε ς βασιλ α π Ισραηλ κα
v v κουε τ ς φων ς κυρ ου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:1 And Samuel said to Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee king over Israel: and now hear the voice of the Lord.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:1 Then Samuel said to Saul, "I was the one the LORD sent to anoint you as king over his people Israel. Now listen to what the LORD says.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel told Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people Israel. Now, listen to the words of the LORD.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:1 And Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:1 One day Samuel said to Saul, "It was the LORD who told me to anoint you as king of his people, Israel. Now listen to this message from the LORD!

NRS 1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the LORD.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul, 'I am the man whom Yahweh sent to anoint you as king of his people Israel, so now listen to the words of Yahweh.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:1 Samuel said to Saul: "It was I the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. Now, therefore, listen to the message of the LORD.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:1 And Samuel saith unto Saul, 'Me did Jehovah send to anoint thee for king over His people, over Israel; and now, hearken to the voice of the words of Jehovah:

- **The Lord:** 1Sa 15:17-18 9:16 10:1
- **Listen:** 1Sa 15:16 12:14 13:13 2Sa 23:2,3 1Ch 22:12,13 Ps 2:10,11
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL MOMENTARILY STEPS

BACK ON THE SCENE

Rod Mattoon entitles this chapter **'Incomplete Compliance** - Saul had every reason to become a success, yet, his pride destroyed him. His disobedience and lack of trust brought God's discipline in his life. He lost God's blessing, his royal crown, and eventually his life. How did this tragedy all come about? In simple terms.... he abandoned God's way and began to live on "substitutes" for God. Chapter fifteen reveals how he started relying on these counterfeits for God. ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)

Then - Marks progression in narrative. Wiersbe writes that "God would give Saul one more chance to prove himself, this time by utterly destroying Israel's old enemies, the Amalekites (Deut. 25:17–19; Ex. 17:16)." (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

Samuel - Recall Samuel has been out of the picture since the end of 1Sa 13:15+ "Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men."

said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel - First anointing was private (1Sa 10:1) and the second was public (1Sa 10:24). It is notable that you never find Saul speaking to God, but only to God's man, the man of God, Samuel. Saul seemed to have forgotten Who had put him into office.

Why this reminder from Samuel? Saul needed to remember that God had sovereignly established him as king and he was not king because he had inherited or merited the title! And He had used His prophet Samuel to anoint him. This reminder would add weight and authority to what Samuel was getting ready to say to Saul.

now therefore - Since you are the anointed king over Israel Samuel has a word from the LORD.

Listen ([shama](#) - obey; Lxx = [akouo](#)) **to the words of the LORD** - KJV has "hearken" which means to listen attentively to, to heed with the implication that one obeys what they hear. The command to **listen** is equivalent to a command to **obey!** Note then that Samuel is not giving Saul a "good suggestion" but an absolute command Saul is to obey, a command he goes on to explain in the following passages.

Note that [shama](#) is a **key verb/word** in this chapter - 8x in 7v - 1Sa 15:1, 4, 14, 19, 20, 22, 24. And note that in 1Sa 15: 19, 20, 22 [shama](#) is translated **obey**.

1 Samuel 15:2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:2 τ δε ε πεν κ ριος σαβαωθ ν ν κδικ σω πο ησεν Αμαληκ τ Ισραηλ ς π ντησεν α τ ν τ δ ναβα νοντος α το ξ Α γ ππου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:2 Thus said the Lord of hosts, Now will I take vengeance for what Amalec did to Israel, when he met him in the way as he came up out of Egypt.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:2 Here is what the LORD of hosts says: 'I carefully observed how the Amalekites opposed Israel along the way when Israel came up from Egypt.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:2 This is what the LORD of Hosts says: 'I witnessed what the Amalekites did to the Israelites when they opposed them along the way as they were coming out of Egypt.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:2 This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies has declared: I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek for opposing Israel when they came from Egypt.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did in opposing the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:2 This is what Yahweh Sabaoth says, "I intend to punish what Amalek did to Israel -- laying a trap for him on the way as he was coming up from Egypt.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:2 This is what the LORD of hosts has to say: 'I will punish what Amalek did to Israel when he barred his way as he was coming up from Egypt.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:2 'Thus said Jehovah of Hosts, I have looked after that which Amalek did to Israel, that which he laid for him in the way in his going up out of Egypt.

RSV 1 Samuel 15:2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way, when they came up out of Egypt.

- **I will punish:** Jer 31:34 Ho 7:2 Am 8:7
- **Amalek:** Ex 17:8-16 Nu 24:20 De 25:17-19
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 17:8-16+ **Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.** 9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "**Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.**" 15 Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; 16 and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Numbers 24:20 And he looked at Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first of the nations, But his end shall be destruction."

Judges 6:3-5 For it was when Israel had sown, that the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. 4 So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. 5 For they would come up with their livestock and their tents, they would come in like locusts for number, both they and their camels were innumerable; and they came into the land to devastate it.

Joshua Fighting Amalekites in Exodus 17

DIVINE RETRIBUTION FOR AMALEK

Thus says the LORD of hosts - [Jehovah Sabaoth, LORD of hosts \(of armies\)](#) NLT = "the LORD of Heaven's Armies" This is the first use of LORD of hosts since 1Sa 4:4, recalling that the first use in Scripture was in 1Sa 1:3, 11. Among other things, **the LORD of hosts** teaches that God reigns and rules over nations, including wicked nations, which gives Him the right to make the following prophetic statements.

'I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel- NLT = "I have decided to settle accounts with the nation of Amalek" It is payday for the Amalekites. Their "bill" is due. Yahweh desires for Amalek to be an illustration of Galatians 6:7 that the "one who sows to the flesh (Amalek is used by many writers as a picture of the flesh) shall from the flesh reap corruption."

THOUGHT - Notice that God states **'I will'** indicating that He is the ultimate Punisher, even though He sometimes uses human instruments. This vital principle permeates the passages of the Bible - God's part, our part. See the "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100)

If Saul had been a man of the book and would have kept the instructions to the king in Deuteronomy 17:18-20, he would already have known Exodus 17:14+ "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." The commands from God through His prophet Samuel would then simply have been a reminder that he was the one given the privilege of blotting out the Amalekites who had so viciously inflicted Israel for

over 400 years (not just the attacks in Exodus!)

THOUGHT - This begs the question - are you a man or woman of one Book? If not that you are spiritually malnourished and in need of a revitalizing, reviving (Ps 119:25+, Ps 19:7ESV+ "reviving") infusion of the pure milk of the Word, that by it you might grow in respect to salvation (aka "progressive sanctification" - 1Pe 2:2+). Are you growing in Christ (2Pe 3:18+) or just growing older. Beloved, forget about "New Year's Resolutions!" Instead make a "New Day's Resolution!" and make it EVERY DAY because your enemies are incessantly (daily) strategizing and attacking your soul! (1Pe 2:11+) Eat the Book (Heb 5:14+, Jer 15:16+), drink the Book (1Pe 2:2+), live the Book (Dt 32:47+, John 6:63, Php 2:16+, 1Jn 1:1+), share the Book with the lost (Ro 1:16+, 1Pe 3:15+) that they too might have life in Christ (Col 3:4+)! Don't procrastinate or [prevaricate](#) or put off! Today is the day to resolve to be a man or woman of one Book! Don't be like King Saul, who missed the opportunity of a lifetime to reign as more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus our soon coming King of kings. Amen! A T Pierson said that "While other books inform, and some few reform, this *ONE BOOK* transforms."

how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt - NJB = "laying a trap for him on the way" God had not forgotten Amalek's sins against Israel committed almost 400 years earlier. God had promised to destroy the Amalekites initially in about 1446 B.C., near the date of the Exodus. Now He is calling for fulfillment of this promise in about 1010 B.C. There is a principle here that just because sin is not punished immediately, does not mean God has forgotten and it will not be punished eventually. The "[mills of God turn slowly but surely](#)."

Deuteronomy 25:17-19+ "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, 18 how he met you along the way and **attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.** 19 "Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, **you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.**

Amalekite (06002)(Amaleq) - 39x in 37v - Amalek(25), Amalekites(14).

QUESTION - [Who were the Amalekites?](#)

ANSWER - The Amalekites were a formidable tribe of nomads living in the area south of Canaan, between [Mount Seir](#) and the Egyptian border. The Amalekites are not listed in the table of nations in Genesis 10, as they did not originate until after Esau's time. In Numbers 24:20 Balaam refers to the Amalekites as "first among the nations," but he most likely meant only that the Amalekites were the first ones to attack the Israelites upon their exodus from Egypt or that the Amalekites were "first" in power at that time. Genesis 36 refers to the descendants of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau, as Amalekites (verses 12 and 16). So, the Amalekites were somehow related to, but distinct from, the [Edomites](#).

Scripture records the long-lasting feud between the Amalekites and the Israelites and God's direction to wipe the Amalekites off the face of the earth (Exodus 17:8-13; 1 Samuel 15:2; Deuteronomy 25:17). Why God would call His people to exterminate an entire tribe is a difficult question, but a look at history may give some insight.

Like many desert tribes, the Amalekites were nomadic. Numbers 13:29 places them as native to the [Negev](#), the desert between Egypt and Canaan. The Babylonians called them the Sute, Egyptians the Sittiu, and the Amarna tablets refer to them as the Khabbati, or "plunderers."

The Amalekites' unrelenting brutality toward the Israelites began with an attack at Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-13). This is recounted in Deuteronomy 25:17-19 with this admonition: "Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind [typically women and children]: they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!"

The Amalekites later joined with the Canaanites and attacked the Israelites at Hormah (Numbers 14:45). In Judges they banded with the Moabites (Judges 3:13) and the Midianites (Judges 6:3) to wage war on the Israelites. They were responsible for the repeated destruction of the Israelites' land and food supply.

In 1 Samuel 15:2-3, God tells King Saul, "I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them, put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."

In response, King Saul first warns the Kenites, friends of Israel, to leave the area. He then attacks the Amalekites but does not complete the task. He allows the Amalekite King [Agag](#) to live, takes plunder for himself and his army, and lies about the reason for doing so. [Saul's rebellion](#) against God and His commands is so serious that he is rejected by God as king (1 Samuel 15:23).

The escaped Amalekites continued to harass and plunder the Israelites in successive generations that spanned hundreds of years. 1 Samuel 30 reports an Amalekite raid on [Ziklag](#), a Judean village where David held property. The Amalekites burned the village and took captive all the women and children, including two of David's wives. David and his men defeated the Amalekites and rescued all the hostages. A few hundred Amalekites escaped, however. Much later, during the reign of King Hezekiah, a group of Simeonites "killed the remaining Amalekites" who had been living in the hill country of Seir (1 Chronicles 4:42–43).

The last mention of the Amalekites is found in the book of Esther where [Haman the Agagite](#), a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag, connives to have all the Jews in Persia annihilated by order of King Xerxes. God saved the Jews in Persia, however, and Haman, his sons, and the rest of Israel's enemies were destroyed instead (Esther 9:5–10).'

The Amalekites' hatred of the Jews and their repeated attempts to destroy God's people led to their ultimate doom. Their fate should be a warning to all who would attempt to thwart God's plan or who would curse what God has blessed (see Genesis 12:3). [GotQuestions.org](#)

1 Samuel 15:3 'Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

BGT 1 Samuel 15:3 κα ν ν πορε ου κα πατ ξεις τ ν Αμαληκ κα Ιεριμ κα π ντα τ ατο κα ο περιποι σ ξ ατο κα ξολεθρε σεις α τ ν κα ναθεμαπιε ρ α τ ν κα π ντα τ ατο κα ο φε σ π ατο κα ποκτενε ρ π νδρ ρ κα ως γυναικ ρ κα π νηπ ου ως θηλ ζοντο ρ κα π μ σχου ως προβ του κα π καμ λου ως νου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:3 And now go, and thou shalt smite Amalec and Hierim and all that belongs to him, and thou shalt not save anything of him alive, but thou shalt utterly destroy him: and thou shalt devote him and all his to destruction, and thou shalt spare nothing belonging to him; and thou shalt slay both man and woman, and infant and suckling, and calf and sheep, and camel and ass.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:3 So go now and strike down the Amalekites. Destroy everything that they have. Don't spare them. Put them to death— man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey alike."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.' "

NLT 1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation-- men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:3 Now, go and crush Amalek; put him under the curse of destruction with all that he possesses. Do not spare him, but kill man and woman, babe and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' "

NAB 1 Samuel 15:3 Go, now, attack Amalek, and deal with him and all that he has under the ban. Do not spare him, but kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and asses."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:3 Now, go, and thou hast smitten Amalek, and devoted all that it hath, and thou hast no pity on it, and hast put to death from man unto woman, from infant unto suckling, from ox unto sheep, from camel unto ass.'

- **utterly destroy:** Lev 27:28-29 Nu 24:20 Dt 13:15-16 Dt 20:16-18 Jos 6:17-21

- **put to death:** Ex 20:5 Nu 31:17 Isa 14:21,22
- **ox and sheep:** Ge 3:17,18 Ro 8:20-22

Related Passages:

Exodus 17:14+ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

Numbers 24:20 And he looked at **Amalek** and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first of the nations, But his end shall be destruction."

Deuteronomy 13:15-16 you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. 16"Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt.

Deuteronomy 20:16-18 "Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, **you shall not leave alive anything that breathes.** 17 "But you shall **utterly destroy** them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you (**A COMMAND ISRAEL LARGELY DISOBEYED TO THEIR CHAGRIN!**), 18 **so that** (TERM OF PURPOSE) they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods (AKA "IDOLATRY"), so that you would sin against the LORD your God (BREAKING THE FIRST COMMANDMENT - NO OTHER GODS!).

DESTROY AMALEK!

CLEAR INSTRUCTION FOR UTTER DESTRUCTION!

Now - This describes God's timing for the destruction of Amalek. This would also be a test on Saul to see if he would obey. One might ask "When is 'now'?" While we cannot be dogmatic this is probably some 20 years into Saul's reign (Jonathan is a grown man) and he has been victorious over the surrounding nations (1Sa 14:47). 1Sa 14:48 would seem to describe the events of chapter 15, for he did defeat Amalek, albeit he failed to utterly destroy them.

Go and strike ([nākāh](#); Lxx = [patasso](#) - strike a blow against) **Amalek and utterly destroy** ([charam](#); Lxx = [exolethreuo](#)) **all that he has** - Note Samuel says that Saul is to "**go and strike Amalek**," whereas in verse 2 He had said "**I will punish Amalek**." At times God acts without man as in the global flood or destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but this time He would act in concert with man. God in His sovereignty mysteriously interacts with men's (Saul's) responsibility and, as we see, He will hold Saul responsible! Amalek's wages for their sins against Israel was death (Dt 25:17-19+). God calls for [genocide](#) of the Amalekite people group! This recalls God's words to Abram in Genesis 15:16+ "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" indicating that God is longsuffering not wanting for any to perish but for all peoples to come to repentance. For the Amalekites, God says in essence "Time's up! Time to meet your Maker!"

As a side note a **key verb/word** in this chapter is **utterly destroy** ([charam](#)) - 1Sa 15:3; 1Sa 15:8; 1Sa 15:9; 1Sa 15:15; 1Sa 15:18; 1Sa 15:20. For a more in depth discussion of God's command to **utterly destroy** which to some seems harsh and unfair see the Comments attached to Deuteronomy 7:2.

Utterly destroy is literally "to put under a ban," as at Jericho at (Josh. 6:17, 18) and meant it was all "devoted" to God. No spoil was to be taken.

And do not spare him; but (term of contrast - reverses direction of thought, in this case dramatically) **put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey** - CEV = "don't take pity on" While God does not stutter, He does repeat 4 times (strike, utter destroy, do not spare, put to death) His job for Saul. God's instruction is crystal clear to the one who has an ear to hear and a heart to obey.

Meyer on does God still judge nations - "But we cannot suppose, for a single moment, that the judgment of the nations is to be altogether relegated [appointed] to that final day. Throughout the history of the world the nations have been standing before Christ's bar. Nineveh stood there, Babylon stood there, Greece and Rome stood there, Spain and France stood there, and Great Britain is standing there to-day. One after another has had the solemn word—depart, and they have passed into a destruction which has been absolute and terrible."

MacArthur comments that "God gave Saul an opportunity to redeem himself with obedience. The judgment was to be a complete and total annihilation of anything that breathed. God's judgment was severe on those who would destroy His people. It was equally severe to those who disobeyed (cf. Achan in Josh. 7:10–26). (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Brian Bell - Critics of this passage & one's like it in scripture, may be a little too dependent on sentiment then on spiritual truth, not realizing how long-suffering the Lord had been w/these nations, & how unspeakably wicked they were. Amalekites were descendants of Esau (unbelieving brother of Jacob) & enemy of the Jewish people. The army of Amalek attacked the recently emancipated slaves shortly after Israel came out of Egypt. Sum up Ex.17:8-16 1. See promise vs.14. The Lord declared perpetual war against Amalek vs.17. More details Read Deut. 25:17-19. a) Why was God was so mad? vs.18 [rear ranks: women, children, grandparents, sick, weary, tired] Don't forget vs.19 - God viewed this as reprehensible! So, Amalek attacked when Israel was most vulnerable; habitually when they settled in the land; by the time of the kings their cup of iniquity was full! **They proved themselves as hopelessly & incorrigibly corrupt.** (ED: cf **Intractable enemies of Israel in time of Judges - Jdg 3:13, 6:3, 6:33, 7:12, 10:12**.) Judgment had come! God's covenant w/the Jewish nation includes the promise, "I will curse those who curse you." (Ge 12:3) And, God always keeps His word! Nations like the Amalekites who wanted to exterminate the Jews weren't just waging war on Israel; they were opposing Almighty God & His great plan of redemption for the whole world! a) It's a Jesus issue. (i.e.) If Jews are wiped out, Jesus doesn't come! Simple but potent lesson from the Amalekites...We cannot do as we please! In time, divine retribution will over-take those who practice evil. 1 Tim.5:24 Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. (timing issue!) Hosea 8:7 said, They that sow to the wind, will reap the whirlwind. Jesus said, For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. (Mt.7:2)

Strike (struck)([05221](#)) **nākāh** A verb meaning to beat, to strike, to wound. The meaning of the vb. ranges from hitting to killing. ni. be hit, be struck down; pu. be battered, ruined, destroyed; hi. strike, hit, beat, strike dead, wound, batter, destroy; ho. be struck down (dead), be taken, be hit (#5782); nom. מַכָּה (makkā), blow, stroke, wound, plague, defeat There are many instances of striking physically (Ex. 21:15, 19; Job 16:10; Ps. 3:7[8]; Song 5:7). Of Yahweh smiting the firstborn (Nu 3:13, 8:17), His own people (Nu 11:33). Of Moses striking the rock twice resulting in his not being allowed to enter the Promised Land (Nu 20:11) Frequently, nākāh is related to the Israelite conquest of Canaan. God used disease to smite the inhabitants of Canaan (Num. 14:12). This word is also used in a different sense, as when the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were stricken blind by the two angels (Gen. 19:11); when a priest stuck a fork into the kettle (1 Sam. 2:14); when people clapped their hands (2 Kgs. 11:12); or when people verbally abused Jeremiah (Jer. 18:18). God struck the Egyptians with plagues (Ex. 3:20); and struck people down in judgment (Isa. 5:25).

SEVERAL ARTICLES ON UTTERLY DESTROY

James Coakley on utterly destroy them - God's call to exterminate all the people groups currently occupying the land has been thought of as unloving and severe. Several factors may help explain the reasons such a command was given. .

First, all people are sinners and are under God's judgment. Only by God's mercy are any people groups allowed to live.

Second, the context (Dt 7:10) implies that these nations hated the Lord, so they were not neutral toward the God of Israel.

Third, Ge 15:13 states that God had been patient with these nations for hundreds of years and had delayed their punishment until this exact point in history. God was giving the Canaanites as much time as was needed to become as wildly corrupt as possible. God's command to annihilate them is tied to this circumstance alone and should not be used as justification for any genocide.

(**ED COMMENT** - The patience of the Lord reminds me of the days of Noah - In Genesis 6:3 God gave man 120 years before the judgment of the flood would fall and even provided Noah a **preacher (kerux) of righteousness** for them to hear the good news but none but his own family heeded his warnings of coming judgment (2Pe 2:5+, cf 1 Peter 3:20+ and 2 Pe 3:15+ speaking of the delay in the return of the Lord thus providing an opportunity for men to repent. God provided righteous, tormented Lot as a witness and warning to Sodom before He destroyed them - 2 Pe 2:7-9+)

Fourth, if Israel let these nations live in their land, their pagan practices would be propagated and emulated by the people of God (Dt 20:17–18).

Fifth, the command to exterminate the Canaanite nations is mitigated somewhat by God's allowing individual non-Jewish women like Rahab and Ruth to enter into the messianic line. God always had a plan that included the nations (Ge 12:2–3), but He promised Israel they would occupy this land as gift from Him. Israel was actually to offer peace with any nation outside her borders (Dt 20:10–

18), but to exterminate any pagan nation within its borders.

Even though not specifically mentioned here, extending annihilation to Canaanite children is an affront to modern sensibilities. The totality of this destruction is connected in this text (Dt 7:3) to the prohibition of assimilation to other nations. If these children were allowed to live they would become a snare for Israel. The killing of all Canaanites, including the children, served as a preventative measure against assimilating with the Canaanite way of life and as a stark reminder that Israel was to be set apart exclusively for God. (See [The Moody Bible Commentary](#))

QUESTION - [Why did God command the extermination / genocide of the Canaanites, women and children included?](#)

ANSWER - In 1 Samuel 15:2-3, God commanded Saul and the Israelites, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'" God ordered similar things when the Israelites were invading the promised land (Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 20:16-18). Why would God have the Israelites exterminate an entire group of people, women and children included?

This is a difficult issue. We do not fully understand why God would command such a thing, but we trust God that He is just – and we recognize that we are incapable of fully understanding a sovereign, infinite, and eternal God. As we look at difficult issues such as this one, we must remember that God's ways are higher than our ways and [His thoughts are higher than our thoughts \(Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33-36\)](#). We have to be willing to trust God and have faith in Him even when we do not understand His ways.

Unlike us, God knows the future. God knew what the results would be if Israel did not completely eradicate the Amalekites. If Israel did not carry out God's orders, the Amalekites would come back to trouble the Israelites in the future. Saul claimed to have killed everyone but the Amalekite king Agag (1 Samuel 15:20). Obviously, Saul was lying—just a couple of decades later, there were enough Amalekites to take David and his men's families captive (1 Samuel 30:1-2). After David and his men attacked the Amalekites and rescued their families, 400 Amalekites escaped. If Saul had fulfilled what God had commanded him, this never would have occurred. Several hundred years later, [a descendant of Agag, Haman](#) tried to have the entire Jewish people exterminated (see the book of Esther). So, Saul's incomplete obedience almost resulted in Israel's destruction. God knew this would occur, so He ordered the extermination of the Amalekites ahead of time.

In regard to the Canaanites, God commanded, "In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them — the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites — as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 20:16-18). The Israelites failed in this mission as well, and exactly what God said would happen occurred (Judges 2:1-3; 1 Kings 11:5; 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3-4). God did not order the extermination of these people to be cruel, but to prevent even greater evil from occurring in the future.

Probably the most difficult part of these commands from God is that God ordered the death of children and infants as well. Why would God order the death of innocent children?

- (1) Children are not innocent (Psalm 51:5; 58:3).
- (2) These children would have likely grown up as adherents to the evil religions and practices of their parents.
- (3) These children would naturally have grown up resentful of the Israelites and later sought to avenge the "unjust" treatment of their parents.

Again, this answer does not completely deal with all the issues. Our focus should be on trusting God even when we do not understand His ways. We also must remember that God looks at things from an eternal perspective and that His ways are higher than our ways. God is just, righteous, holy, loving, merciful, and gracious. How His attributes work together can be a mystery to us – but that does not mean that He is not who the Bible proclaims Him to be. [GotQuestions.org](#)

Doug McIntosh has an excellent discussion of this difficult topic - As Israel entered the land of promise, they were told, "When the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy" (Deut. 7:2). Few statements of Scripture have received harsher criticism than this one. It seems to conflict with repeated biblical commands to show mercy to others (see Zech. 7:9; Mic. 6:8; Mt. 23:23). What are we to make of this divinely announced policy of extermination?

In part, the policy represents God's own justice at work through Israel's weapons of war. God waited until this period of time to bring Israel into the land, at the moment Canaanite culture was at its most depraved (cp. Ge 15:16). The Canaanites needed to be judged, and Israel was God's instrument of judgment.

However, it should also be noted that extermination does not represent the standard policy that God commanded Israel to pursue. When describing Israel's behavior toward the inhabitants of Canaan, the normal imperative was not exterminate but drive out: "When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places" (Nu 33:51-52). Calls to expel or drive out far outnumber commands to kill the Canaanites.

The two commands are actually compatible when seen from God's perspective. He had two primary purposes in bringing Israel into Canaan. First, he wanted to give the land to Israel and fulfill his promises to the patriarchs. Second, he desired to provide Israel a homeland that was free of the temptations to moral depravity that were part of Canaanite religion. As a result, the culture had to be destroyed—an action as easily accomplished by expulsion as by extermination.

Israel's slow approach over a period of forty years was closely observed by the native peoples (cp. Josh. 2:9-11). Many of them must have left voluntarily as Israel drew near, particularly after the dramatic and early victory at Jericho. Those who held out and remained behind the walls of Canaanite cities would have been the people who had the most to lose by leaving: the civic and religious leaders most committed to the blasphemous and degraded Canaanite cult. God knew that if they survived they would prove enthusiastic evangelists for the twisted cult—and so they did.

Israel's greatest danger would come after the fighting was over, when they saw the survivors of the battles they fought. Their natural inclination would have been to bring those devotees to paganism into their own homes and to adopt their guests' immoral and destructive religious practices. Their most profound danger, in effect, came in showing mercy toward those who posed a lethal danger to them.

Regrettably, that danger became a reality. Because Israel refused to exterminate that hard core of survivors, God's people became infected with idolatry so deeply that they themselves eventually had to be driven from the land. Israel exhibited an incomplete dedication to an important task. They thought so little of God's commands and their own spiritual lives that they permitted small pockets of wickedness to infect their nation.

Believers can make a similar mistake. We are to have no mercy on the sins that lie resident within us. We are persistently and without hesitation to drive them out of our lives, or they will become causes for spiritual stumbling. (See [Holman Old Testament Commentary – Deuteronomy](#))

[Walter Kaiser in Hard Sayings - scroll down to page 178](#)

Completely Destroy Them! - 1 Samuel 15:18

A chief objection to the view that the God of the Old Testament is a God of love and mercy is the divine command to exterminate all the men, women and children belonging to the seven or eight Canaanite nations. How could God approve of blanket destruction, of the genocide of an entire group of people?

Attempts to tone down the command or to mitigate its stark reality fail from the start. God's instructions are too clear, and too many texts speak of consigning whole populations to destruction: Exodus 23:32–33; 34:11–16; and Deuteronomy 7:1–5; 20:16–18.

In most of these situations, a distinctive Old Testament concept known as *herem* is present. It means "curse," "that which stood under the ban" or "that which was dedicated to destruction." The root idea of this term was "separation"; however, this situation was not the positive concept of sanctification in which someone or something was set aside for the service and glory of God. This was the opposite side of the same coin: to set aside or separate for destruction.

God dedicated these things or persons to destruction because they violently and steadfastly impeded or opposed his work over a long period of time. This "dedication to destruction" was not used frequently in the Old Testament. It was reserved for the spoils of southern Canaan (Num 21:2–3), Jericho (Josh 6:21), Ai (Josh 8:26), Makedah (Josh 10:28) and Hazor (Josh 11:11).

In a most amazing prediction, Abraham was told that his descendants would be exiled and mistreated for four hundred years (in round numbers for 430 years) before God would lead them out of that country. The reason for so long a delay, Genesis 15:13–16 explains, was that "the sin of the Amorites [the Canaanites] has not yet reached its full measure." Thus, God waited for centuries while the Amalekites and those other Canaanite groups slowly filled up their own cups of condemnation by their sinful behavior. God never acted precipitously against them; his grace and mercy waited to see if they would repent and turn from their headlong plummet into self-destruction.

Not that the conquering Israelites were without sin. Deuteronomy 9:5 makes that clear to the Israelites: "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations."

These nations were cut off to prevent the corruption of Israel and the rest of the world (Deut 20:16–18). When a nation starts burning children as a gift to the gods (Lev 18:21) and practices sodomy, bestiality and all sorts of loathsome vices (Lev 18:25, 27–30), the day of God’s grace and mercy has begun to run out.

Just as surgeons do not hesitate to amputate a gangrenous limb, even if they cannot help cutting off some healthy flesh, so God must do the same. This is not doing evil that good may come; it is removing the cancer that could infect all of society and eventually destroy the remaining good.

God could have used pestilence, hurricanes, famine, diseases or anything else he wanted. In this case he chose to use Israel to reveal his power, but the charge of cruelty against God is no more deserved in this case than it is in the general order of things in the world where all of these same calamities happen.

In the providential acts of life, it is understood that individuals share in the life of their families and nations. As a result we as individuals participate both in our families’ and nations’ rewards and in their punishments. Naturally this will involve some so-called innocent people; however, even that argument involves us in a claim to omniscience which we do not possess. If the women and children had been spared in those profane Canaanite nations, how long would it have been before a fresh crop of adults would emerge just like their pagan predecessors?

Why was God so opposed to the Amalekites? When the Israelites were struggling through the desert toward Canaan, the Amalekites picked off the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of marchers and brutally murdered these stragglers. Warned Moses, “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God” (Deut 25:17–18).

Some commentators note that the Amalekites were not merely plundering or disputing who owned what territories; they were attacking God’s chosen people to discredit the living God. Some trace the Amalekites’ adamant hostility all through the Old Testament, including the most savage butchery of all in Haman’s proclamation that all Jews throughout the Persian Empire could be massacred on a certain day (Esther 3:8–11). Many make a case that Haman was an Amalekite. His actions then would ultimately reveal this nation’s deep hatred for God, manifested toward the people through whom God had chosen to bless the whole world.

In Numbers 25:16–18 and 31:1–18 Israel was also told to conduct a war of extermination against all in Midian, with the exception of the prepubescent girls, because the Midianites had led them into idolatry and immorality. It was not contact with foreigners per se that was the problem, but the threat to Israel’s relationship with the Lord. The divine command, therefore, was to break Midian’s strength by killing all the male children and also the women who had slept with a man and who could still become mothers.

The texts of Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 7:1–2 and Psalm 106:34 are further examples of the principle of herem, dedicating the residents of Canaan to total destruction as an involuntary offering to God.

See also comment on NUMBERS 25:7–13; 2 KINGS 6:21–23.

[Gleason Archer - Bible Difficulties - scroll to page 161 - Was Joshua justified in exterminating the population of Jericho?](#)

In Joshua 6:21 we read, “And they utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword” (NASB). Verses 22–23 go on to say that Rahab the harlot, who had risked her life in order to save the two Israelite spies who had come earlier in order to reconnoiter the city, was spared from death, along with her entire family—as the two spies had promised that she would be. But everything combustible in the city was put to the torch; and all articles of gold, silver, iron and bronze were devoted to the treasury of the tabernacle.

Such complete destruction might appear to be needlessly harsh, since it included infants who were too young to have committed overt sin, even though the older children and the adults may all have fallen into utter depravity. Should we not understand this severity to be the result of a savage Bedouin mentality on the part of the wilderness warriors rather than a punitive measure ordained of God?

In answer to this humanitarian objection, we need to recognize first of all that the biblical record indicates that Joshua was simply carrying out God’s orders in this matter. In other words, the same account that tells of the massacre itself is the account that tells of God’s commands to carry it out. Therefore we must recognize that our criticism cannot be leveled at Joshua or the Israelites but at the God whose bidding they obeyed. (Otherwise we must demonstrate our own special competence to correct the biblical record on the basis of our own notions of probability as to what God might or might not decide to do.) If criticism there be, we should not stop there, for the destruction of Jericho was far smaller an affair than the annihilation of the populations of Sodom and Gomorrah and their allies in Genesis 19:24–25. And then again this volcanic catastrophe was far less significant in the loss of life than Noah’s Flood, which, except for Noah’s family, wiped out the entire human race.

Back in Genesis 15:16 God had forewarned Abraham: "Then in the fourth generation [i.e., in four hundred years, after the migration to Egypt, since Abraham was one hundred before he became the father of Isaac] they [the Israelites] shall return here [to Canaan], for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" (NASB). The implication of this last statement was that when the wickedness of the inhabitants of Canaan had reached a predetermined accumulation of guilt, then God would have them removed from the Land of Promise intended for Abraham and his seed.

The loss of innocent life in the demolition of Jericho was much to be regretted, but we must recognize that there are times when only radical surgery will save the life of a cancer-stricken body. The whole population of the antediluvian civilization had become hopelessly infected with the cancer of moral depravity (Gen. 6:5). Had any of them been permitted to live while still in rebellion against God, they might have infected Noah's family as well. The same was true of the detestable inhabitants of Sodom, wholly given over to the depravity of homosexuality and rape, in the days of Abraham and Lot. As with the Benjamites of Gibeah at a later period (Judg. 19:22–30; 20:43–48), the entire population had to be destroyed. So also it was with Jericho and Ai as well (Josh. 8:18–26); likewise with Makkedah (Josh. 10:28), Lachish (v.32), Eglon (v.35), Debir (v.39), and all the cities of the Negev and the Shephelah (v.40). In the northern campaign against Hazor, Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph, the same thorough destruction was meted out (Josh. 11:11–14).

In every case the baneful infection of degenerate idolatry and moral depravity had to be removed before Israel could safely settle down in these regions and set up a monotheistic, law-governed commonwealth as a testimony for the one true God. Much as we regret the terrible loss of life, we must remember that far greater mischief would have resulted if they had been permitted to live on in the midst of the Hebrew nation. These incorrigible degenerates of the Canaanite civilization were a sinister threat to the spiritual survival of Abraham's race. The failure to carry through completely the policy of the extermination of the heathen in the Land of Promise later led to the moral and religious downfall of the Twelve Tribes in the days of the Judges (Judg. 2:1–3, 10–15, 19–23). Not until the time of David, some centuries later, did the Israelites succeed in completing their conquest of all the land that had been promised to the descendants of Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:18–21). This triumph was only possible in a time of unprecedented religious vigor and purity of faith and practice such as prevailed under the leadership of King David, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

In our Christian dispensation true believers possess resources for resisting the corrupting influence of unconverted worldlings such as were hardly available to the people of the old covenant. As warriors of Christ who have yielded our members to Him as "weapons of righteousness" (Rom. 6:13) and whose bodies are indwelt and empowered by God the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), we are well able to lead our lives in the midst of a corrupt and degenerate non-Christian culture (whether in the Roman Empire or in modern secularized Europe or America) and still keep true to God. We have the example of the Cross and the victory of the Resurrection of Christ our Lord, and he goes with us everywhere and at all times as we carry out the Great Commission.

As New Testament believers, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual, "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4–5). These weapons, far mightier than those of Joshua, are able to capture men's hearts for God; and we have no occasion as ambassadors for Christ to resort to physical weapons to protect our faith and land (as the Israelites were compelled to do, if they were to survive spiritually). But on the contrary we carry on a life-saving offensive as fishers of men, and we go after the unsaved and unconverted wherever they are to be found. But we must recognize that our situation is far more advantageous than theirs, and our prospects of victory over the world are far brighter than theirs. For this we can thank God. But we must refrain from condemnation of those who lived in the very different situation that prevailed before the Cross and recognize that they acted in obedience and faith toward God when they carried out his orders concerning the Canaanites.

1 Samuel 15:4 Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:4 κα παρ γγειλεν Σαουλ τ λα κα πισκ ππεται α το ς ν Γαλγαλοις τετρακοσ ας χιλι δας ταγμ των κα τ ν Ιουδαν τρι κοντα χιλι δας ταγμ των

LXE 1 Samuel 15:4 And Saul summoned the people, and he numbered them in Galgala, four hundred thousand regular troops, and Juda thirty thousand regular troops.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:4 So Saul assembled the army and mustered them at Telaim. There were 200,000 foot

soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:4 Then Saul summoned the troops and counted them at Telaim: 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men from Judah.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:4 So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:4 So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim--two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:4 So Saul mobilized his army at Telaim. There were 200,000 soldiers from Israel and 10,000 men from Judah.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:4 So Saul summoned the people, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand foot soldiers, and ten thousand soldiers of Judah.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:4 Saul summoned the people and reviewed them at Telaim: two hundred thousand foot soldiers (and ten thousand men of Judah).

NAB 1 Samuel 15:4 Saul alerted the soldiers, and at Telaim reviewed two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men of Judah.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:4 And Saul summoneth the people, and inspecteth them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand are men of Judah.

- **Telaim:** Jos 15:24
- **200,000 foot soldiers:** 1Sa 11:8 13:15
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 11:8+ (He numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000.

Then - Marks progression in the narrative.

Saul summoned (*shama*; Lxx - *paraggello* = commanded, ordered) **the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah** - While this is a large army, the first army that went against Nahash the Ammonite was even larger ([see above](#)). Again the writer distinguishes soldiers from **Judah** from the soldiers from the other 11 tribes. Some writers think that this is because this was written after the kingdom was divided.

QUESTION - [Why did God command the extermination / genocide of the Canaanites, women and children included?](#)

ANSWER - In 1 Samuel 15:2-3, God commanded Saul and the Israelites, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'" God ordered similar things when the Israelites were invading the promised land (Deut 2:34; 3:6; 20:16-18).

Why would God have the Israelites exterminate an entire group of people, women and children included?

This is a difficult issue. We do not fully understand why God would command such a thing, but we trust God that He is just – and we recognize that we are incapable of fully understanding a sovereign, infinite, and eternal God. As we look at difficult issues such as this one, we must remember that God's ways are higher than our ways and [His thoughts are higher than our thoughts](#) (Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33-36). We have to be willing to trust God and have faith in Him even when we do not understand His ways.

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him, this never would have occurred.

Several hundred years later, a descendant of Agag, Haman (See [Haman the Agagite](#)), **tried to have the entire Jewish people exterminated** (see the book of Esther). So, Saul's incomplete obedience (**ED: AKA COMPLETE DISOBEDIENCE!**) almost resulted in Israel's destruction. God knew this would occur, so He ordered the extermination of the Amalekites ahead of time.

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Again, this answer does not completely deal with all the issues. Our focus should be on trusting God even when we do not understand His ways. We also must remember that God looks at things from an eternal perspective and that His ways are higher than our ways. God is just, righteous, holy, loving, merciful, and gracious. How His attributes work together can be a mystery to us — but that does not mean that He is not who the Bible proclaims Him to be. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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- [Does God killing people make Him a murderer?](#)
- [Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Midianites in Numbers 31:17?](#)
- [Why did God condone such terrible violence in the Old Testament?](#)
- [Why did the Israelites take the Canaanites as slaves instead of destroying them as they were instructed?](#)
- [What happened during the conquest of Canaan?](#)

1 Samuel 15:5 Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:5 καὶ ἔθεν Σαουλ ὡς τὸ πλεῶν Ἀμαλῆκ καὶ ἐδρευσεν ἐν τῷ χειμῶρι

LXE 1 Samuel 15:5 And Saul came to the cities of Amalec, and laid wait in the valley.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul proceeded to the city of Amalek, where he set an ambush in the wadi.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul came to the city of Amalek and set up an ambush in the wadi.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:5 And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:5 Then Saul and his army went to a town of the Amalekites and lay in wait in the valley.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul came to the city of the Amalekites and lay in wait in the valley.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul advanced on the town of Amalek and lay in ambush in the river bed.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:5 Saul went to the city of Amalek, and after setting an ambush in the wadi,

YLT 1 Samuel 15:5 And Saul cometh in unto a city of Amalek, and layeth wait in a valley;

- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley- NLT = "lay in wait in the valley." See location Amalek above, southwest of Israel. Presumably this chapter is an elaboration of the summary statement in 1Sa 14:48 that Saul "acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites." Even there it does not say Saul annihilated the Amalekites, which he did not do in this chapter.

1 Samuel 15:6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:6 κα ε πεν Σαουλ πρ ς τ ν Κινα ον πελθε κα κκλινον κ μ σου το Αμαληκ του μ προσθ σε μετ α το κα σ πο ησας λεοσ μετ τ ν υ ν Ισραηλ ν τ ναβα νειν α το ς ξ Α γ ππου κα ξ κλινεν Κινα ος κ μ σου Αμαληκ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:6 And Saul said to the Kinite, Go, and depart out of the midst of the Amalekites, lest I put thee with them; for thou dealedst mercifully with the children of Israel when they went up out of Egypt. So the Kinite departed from the midst of Amalec.

KJV 1 Samuel 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 shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

NET 1 Samuel 15:6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go on and leave! Go down from among the Amalekites! Otherwise I will sweep you away with them! After all, you were kind to all the Israelites when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:6 He warned the Kenites, "Since you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, go on and leave! Get away from the Amalekites, or I'll sweep you away with them." So the Kenites withdrew from the Amalekites.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:6 Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:6 Saul sent this warning to the Kenites: "Move away from where the Amalekites live, or you will die with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites packed up and left.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go! Leave! Withdraw from among the Amalekites, or I will destroy you with them; for you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from the Amalekites.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:6 Saul said to the Kenites, 'Go away, leave your homes among the Amalekites, in case I destroy you with them -- you acted with faithful love towards all the Israelites when they were coming up from Egypt.' So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:6 warned the Kenites: "Come! Leave Amalek and withdraw, that I may not have to destroy you with them, for you were kind to the Israelites when they came up from Egypt." After the Kenites left,

YLT 1 Samuel 15:6 and Saul saith unto the Kenite, 'Go, turn aside, go down from the midst of Amalek, lest I consume thee with it, and thou didst kindness with all the sons of Israel, in their going up out of Egypt;' and the Kenite turneth aside from the midst of Amalek.

- **the Kenites:** 1Sa 27:10 Nu 24:21,22 Jdg 1:16 4:11 5:24 1Ch 2:55
- **depart:** Ge 18:25 19:12-16 Nu 16:26,27,34 Pr 9:6 Ac 2:40 2Co 6:17 Rev 18:14
- **showed:** Ex 18:9,10,19 Nu 10:29-32 2Ti 1:16
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

ONE OF SAUL'S BETTER ACTS

Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites - Saul gave 3 commands to the Kenites. Recall that Jethro, Moses' father-in-law was a Kenite. They accompanied Judah in the inheritance of the Promised Land (Judges 1:16).

Bob Roe on the Kenites - Notice that God never forgets when you have obeyed. The Kenites were a Midianite tribe. In Exodus 18, when the Israelites were coming out of the wilderness, Jethro, the priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses, met Moses, blessed him and thanked the Lord for what the Lord had done for the Israelites. He noticed Moses trying to govern 2,000,000 people all by himself and said, "That is not good. Why don't you appoint captains over 1,000s and 100s and 10s? Pick people who have maturity, wisdom, ability to discern, and let them make judgments. Then you represent them to the Lord." In Numbers 10, Moses asked Hobab, his Midianite brother-in-law, to lead the Israelites through the wilderness. These Kenites were nomads and knew that territory like the palm of their hand. They joined the Israelites and led them through the wilderness. Finally they settled with the tribe of Judah in the Promised Land. Although by this time they had wandered down into the southern part of Judah and may have been dwelling with the Amalekites, **400 years before they had made a choice**. That choice was to follow God and be God's instrument. God remembered that. Now, 400 years later, the Kenites are separated and spared during the slaughter of the Amalekites.

so that (term of purpose) **I do not destroy you with them** - The purpose of separation is to prevent their destruction.

for (term of explanation) - What is Saul explaining?

You showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt - How did Saul know? Surely this was conveyed by Samuel in the instruction, albeit they are not recorded.

So (term of conclusion) **the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites** - The conclusion of the Kenites was a wise one to separate from the Amalekites.

Brian Bell - This is similar today when we drop leaflets on a village before we bomb it. K. We admire Saul for being careful to protect the Kenites, but he wasn't careful to obey God's will 1. Some people are very careful to protect the bald eagle, baby seals, & kangaroo-rats...but have no problem turning around & having an abortion?

KENITES - [ISBE] - ke'-nits (ha-qeni, haqeni; in Nu 24:22 and Jdg 4:11, qayin; of hoi Kenaioi, hoi Kinaioi): A tribe of nomads named in association with various other peoples. They are first mentioned along with the Kadmonites and Kenizzites among the peoples whose land was promised to Abram (Gen 15:19). Balaam, seeing them from the heights of Moab; puns upon their name, which resembles the Hebrew ken, "a nest," prophesying their destruction although their nest was "set in the rock"--possibly a reference to Sela, the city. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, is called "the priest of Midian" in Ex 3:1; 18:1; but in Jdg 1:16 he is described as a Kenite, showing a close relation between the Kenites and Midian. At the time of Sisera's overthrow, Heber, a Kenite, at "peace" with Jabin, king of Hazor, pitched his tent far North of his ancestral seats (Jdg 4:17). There were Kenites dwelling among the Amalekites in the time of Saul (1 Sam 15:6). They were spared because they had "showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt." David, in his answer to Achish, links the Kenites with the inhabitants of the South of Judah (1 Sam 27:10). Among the

ancestors of the tribe of Judah, the Chronicler includes the Kenite Hammath, the father of the Rechabites (1 Ch 2:55). These last continued to live in tents, practicing the ancient nomadic customs (Jer 35:6 ff). richly varied landscape, With smiling cornfields, and hills clothed with oak and terebinth.

Kenites - 10v - Gen. 15:19; Num. 24:21; Jdg. 1:16; Jdg. 4:11; Jdg. 4:17; Jdg. 5:24; 1 Sam. 15:6; 1 Sam. 27:10; 1 Sam. 30:29; 1 Chr. 2:55

1 Samuel 15:7 So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:7 καὶ πτόξεν Σαουλ τὴν Ἀμαλήκ πρὸς τὴν εἰλάτῃ ὡς Σοὺρ πρὸς τὴν Αἴγυπτον

LXE 1 Samuel 15:7 And Saul smote Amalec from Evilat to Sur fronting Egypt.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:7 Then Saul struck down the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, which is next to Egypt.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:7 Then Saul struck down the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is next to Egypt.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:7 And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:7 Then Saul slaughtered the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, east of Egypt.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:7 Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:7 Saul then crushed the Amalekites, beginning at Havilah in the direction of Shur, which is to the east of Egypt.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:7 Saul routed Amalek from Havilah to the approaches of Shur, on the frontier of Egypt.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:7 And Saul smiteth Amalek from Havilah -- thy going in to Shur, which is on the front of Egypt,

- smote: 1Sa 14:48 Job 21:30 Ec 8:13
- Havilah: This Havilah was probably situated in Arabia, and the district of Chaulon may mark the spot. It seems different from that encompassed by the river Pison, one of the rivers of Eden. Ge 2:11 25:18
- Shur: 1Sa 27:8 Ge 16:7
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**SO FAR,
SO GOOD!**

So far, so good means that everything is satisfactory or developing as planned up to the current point or moment in time.

So - Term of conclusion.

Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt- While this is "so far, so good," defeating the Amalekites is not the same as utterly obliterating the Amalekites, this distinction becoming more apparent as we read on in this chapter.

NKJV SB - Havilah refers to a district of northeast Arabia. **Shur** was the western part of the Sinai peninsula bordering Egypt. The campaign against the Amalekites covered extensive territory.

1 Samuel 15:8 He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:8 καὶ συνλάβεν τὸν Ἀγαγ βασιλῆα Ἀμαλῆκ ζῆντα καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν Ἰεριμ πικτεῖεν ἐν σιμαίῳ οὐρανόθεν

LXE 1 Samuel 15:8 And he took Agag the king of Amalec alive, and he slew all the people and Hierim with the edge of the sword.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:8 He captured King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but he executed all Agag's people with the sword.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:8 He captured Agag king of Amalek alive, but he completely destroyed all the rest of the people with the sword.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:8 And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:8 He captured Agag, the Amalekite king, but completely destroyed everyone else.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:8 He took King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive and, executing the curse of destruction, put all the people to the sword.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:8 He took Agag, king of Amalek, alive, but on the rest of the people he put into effect the ban of destruction by the sword.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:8 and he catcheth Agag king of Amalek alive, and all the people he hath devoted by the mouth of the sword;

- Agag: 1Sa 15:3 Nu 24:7 1Ki 20:30,34-42 Es 3:1
- utterly: 1Sa 27:8 30:1 Jos 10:39 11:12
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

KING AGAG SPARED DESTRUCTION

He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed ([charam](#)) all the people with the edge of the sword - This passage indicates that Saul exhibited partial obedience, but partial obedience is complete disobedience. All the people were devoted to the ban except one, the king. One sinner remaining (Agag) would be enough to negate the obliteration of all the other Amalekites! Such is the nature of sin! Adam committed one sin and look at the result! Sin has to be killed completely and without mercy.

Partial obedience is complete disobedience.

THOUGHT - Do you have an "Agag" in one of the secret rooms of your heart? If so, beware the consequences of not killing "him" for the consequences can be very costly. As the Puritan John Owen strongly advised "Be killing sin, lest sin will be killing you!" (See [Mortification of Sin](#) articles below) Our "Agag" must be utterly destroyed. Realistically, since we still possess the sin nature, we must not be surprised or discouraged when "Agag" seeks to tempt us!

F B Meyer adds to this thought - "To spare the best of Amalek is surely equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some plausible indulgence, some favourite sin. For us, Agag must stand for that evil propensity, which exists in all of us, for self-gratification; and to spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to exonerate and palliate [excuse] our failures, and to condone our besetting sin.

Bob Roe - The ancient kings used to keep the kings they captured. They did not kill them. They kept them alive as a monument to personal success. One king in the Bible chopped off the thumbs and the big toes of the seventy kings he had captured. He kept them under his table and threw them crumbs. Without thumbs, they would not be able to grasp things. Without big toes, they would not be able to stand straight but would sway. He treated them like pet dogs. So, it appears that Saul fell right in with the pagan kings.

He and the people had killed everyone of the Amalekites except the king. " Agag was a visible monument to Saul's success. The flesh loves that. Have you every had that feeling? Yes, you have, and so have I.

Utterly destroy (destroy completely)(02763) **charam** to destroy, to doom, to devote. This word is most commonly associated with the Israelites destroying the Canaanites upon their entry into the Promised Land (Deut. 7:2; Josh. 11:20). **Herem/charam** means ban, devote (esp. religiously, objects hostile to the theocracy; this involved generally their destruction; when a city was `devoted' the inhabitants were put to death, the spoil being destroyed -- most often of devoting to destruction cities of Canaanites and other neighbours of Israel, exterminating inhabitants, and destroying or appropriating their possessions. Canaanite cities were treated like contraband Nu 21:2,3; Dt 7:2-6; 13:12-15; 20:17,18; Jos 6:21; 8:26; 10:28; 11:11 The lure toward idolatry was removed by devastating the sources. Jdg 1:17 "utterly destroyed" If people were included (Lev 27:28, 29; 1Sa15:3), they were executed.

Charam - 47v - annihilate(1), covet(1), destroy them utterly(1), destroy utterly(1), destroyed them utterly(1), destroying(1), destroying them completely(2), destruction(2), devote(2), forfeited(1), set apart(1), sets apart(1), utterly destroy(11), utterly destroyed(22), utterly destroying(3). Exod. 22:20; Lev. 27:28; Lev. 27:29; Num. 21:2; Num. 21:3; Deut. 2:34; Deut. 3:6; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 13:15; Deut. 20:17; Jos. 2:10; Jos. 6:18; Jos. 6:21; Jos. 8:26; Jos. 10:1; Jos. 10:28; Jos. 10:35; Jos. 10:37; Jos. 10:39; Jos. 10:40; Jos. 11:11; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 11:20; Jos. 11:21; Jdg. 1:17; Jdg. 21:11; 1 Sam. 15:3; 1 Sam. 15:8; 1 Sam. 15:9; 1 Sam. 15:15; 1 Sam. 15:18; 1 Sam. 15:20; 1 Ki. 9:21; 2 Ki. 19:11; 1 Chr. 4:41; 2 Chr. 20:23; 2 Chr. 32:14; Ezr. 10:8; Isa. 11:15; Isa. 34:2; Isa. 37:11; Jer. 25:9; Jer. 50:21; Jer. 50:26; Jer. 51:3; Dan. 11:44; Mic. 4:13

QUESTION - [Who was Agag in the Bible?](#)

ANSWER - Two men are named Agag in Scripture. Like the designation "Pharaoh" in Egypt and "[Abimelech](#)" for the Philistines, "Agag" was apparently a general name for the king of the [Amalekites](#). An Agag is mentioned in Numbers, in the story of Balaam; and another Agag is found in 1 Samuel in conjunction with an event in Saul's life.

When [Balaam](#) prophesied concerning Israel, he stated, "Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" (Numbers 24:7ESV). In prophesying about Israel's future Messiah King, Balaam compared Him to another king, Agag of the Amalekites.

The second man named Agag in Scripture is a later king of Amalek mentioned in 1 Samuel. The Lord had commanded [King Saul](#) to exterminate all the Amalekites and all that they owned, including livestock (1 Samuel 15:1–3). Instead of following the Lord's command, "Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed" (1 Samuel 15:9). Saul and his army took plunder and livestock for themselves, which God had specifically forbidden (1 Samuel 15:3), and Saul also chose to keep Agag the king alive (1 Samuel 15:8).

When the [prophet Samuel](#) confronted Saul about his disobedience, Saul tried to mollify the prophet and justify himself by arguing that the plunder and livestock were intended to be dedicated to the Lord (1 Samuel 15:21). In response, Samuel told Saul he would lose his kingship because of his disobedience (1 Samuel 15:22–23, 28–29). Samuel then did what Saul had refused to do: he killed Agag, saying to him, "As your sword has killed the sons of many mothers, now your mother will be childless." And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal" (1 Samuel 15:33, NLT).

Contrary to Saul's claim to have completely destroyed the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:20), biblical history shows there were still some left. Amalekites are mentioned later in the same book (1 Samuel 27:8). It was the Amalekites who raided David's city of Ziklag, stealing away his family and possessions (1 Samuel 30:1–3). David pursued the Amalekites, defeated all but four hundred of them, and took back all that had been stolen (1 Samuel 30:17–20). Some of those Amalekites were presumably descendants of Agag, because of what we read in the [book of Esther](#).

In Esther, the Jew-hating [Haman](#) is called "the Agagite" (Esther 3:1). Haman was probably a descendant of Agag, but the designation could simply refer to his Amalekite heritage. In either case, the situation in Persia was the result of Amalekites—including Agag and some of his family, we assume—having been spared by King Saul centuries earlier. Saul's disobedience led, in Esther's day, to a descendant of Agag attempting genocide against the Jews (Esther 3:6).

Haman's chief enemy was [Mordecai](#), who was from the same tribe as Saul (Esther 2:5). In the sovereign plan of God, Haman ultimately failed in his attempt to exterminate the Jews (Esther 7:9–10; 9:1–17). Today, the annual Jewish observance of [Purim](#) includes a reading of the story of Amalek's hatred of Israel on the preceding Sabbath.

The lasting threat posed by Agag and the Amalekites shows that, although disobeying the Lord may at first appear to only affect the person sinning, rebellion to God's commands can have consequences

MORTIFICATION OF SIN

Dr John MacArthur writes that "The **Amalekites** are a perfect illustration of the sin that remains in the believer's life. That sin—already utterly defeated at the cross—must be dealt with ruthlessly and hacked to pieces, or it will revive and continue to plunder and pillage his heart and sap his spiritual strength. He cannot be merciful with his Agag, or indwelling sin will turn and try to devour him. In fact, the sin remaining in Christians often becomes more fiercely determined after the gospel initially overthrows it. Scripture commands believers to deal with their sin by putting it to death: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." (Col 3:5-6KJV+). They cannot obey partially or half-heartedly as they seek to eliminate sin from their lives. They cannot stop while the task remains incomplete. Sins, like Amalekites, have a way of escaping the slaughter, breeding, reviving, regrouping, and launching new and unexpected assaults on their victims' most vulnerable areas. **Strike Sin at Its Head.** **John Owen** wrote, "*He that is appointed to kill an enemy, if he leave striking before the other ceases living, doth but half his work.*" Christians must be always at the task of mortifying sin. They may slaughter a whole tribe of Amalekites, but if they deliberately permit one Agag to escape, God will not be pleased with their efforts. The **flesh** is very subtle and deceptive. A particular sin may leave the believer alone for awhile to make him think he is rid of it. But it can come back with a hellish fury if he is not on guard. Sin perpetually stalks him; he must be continually mortifying it. This is a duty he cannot rest from until he rests in glory. Give sin an inch, it will take a mile. If it can gain a footing in Christians' lives, it will send forth roots and grow like **kudzu**. It will use them and abuse them and inflict as much disaster as possible. **Owen** wrote,

"Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could; every covetous desire would be oppression, every thought of unbelief would be atheism, might it grow to its head....It proceeds toward its height by degrees, making good the ground it hath got by hardness.... Now nothing can prevent this but mortification; that withers the root and strikes at the head of sin every hour, so that whatever it aims at it is crossed in. There is not the best saint in the world but, if he should give over this duty, would fall into as many cursed sins as ever did any of his kind." Later, he added, "Sin sets itself against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness while he walks not over the bellies of his lusts."

Christians are not ignorant of Satan's devices, the apostle declares (2 Cor 2:11+)(ED: SEE SCHEMES OF THE DEVIL). Neither should they be naive about the subtleties of their own flesh. When Agag comes to them cheerfully, saying, "*Surely the bitterness of death is past*" (1 Sam 15:32+) or when he wants to make friends and declare an end to hostilities—that is when it is most imperative to turn on him and cut him ruthlessly to pieces before the Lord.

(1) Sin is not mortified when it is merely covered up A Christian can hide his sin from the sight of others, but that is not the same as mortification. If a sin has simply been papered over with hypocrisy, what good is there in that? If conscience has only been daubed, Christians are in a much more dangerous state than before. "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion" (Prov 28:13+). You have not done your duty with regard to your sin until you have confessed and forsaken it.

(2) Sin is not mortified when it is only internalized If you forsake the outward practice of some evil, yet continue to ruminate on the memory of that sin's pleasures, beware. You may have moved your sin into the privacy of your imagination, where it is known only to you and to God, but that sin has not been mortified. If anything, it has become more deadly by being married to pretended righteousness. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for this very thing. They avoided murder, but tolerated hate. They refrained from fornication, but indulged in lustful thoughts. Jesus declared them worthy of eternal hell (Matt 5:21–28+).

(3) Sin is not mortified when it is exchanged for another sin What good is it to trade the lust of the flesh for the lust of the eyes? That lust has not been mortified; it has only changed form. Puritan Thomas Fuller said, "Some think themselves improved in piety, because they have left prodigality and reel into covetousness." If you succumb to this tactic, your heart is in danger of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 3:13+).

(4) Sin is not mortified until the conscience has been appeased The goal is "love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1Ti 1:5+). As long as the conscience remains defiled, it affects a Christian's testimony.

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and **keep a good conscience** so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame” (1 Pet 3:15–16+, emphasis added). Part of the process of mortification is to work through the issue of guilt. Those who attempt to evade guilt for sin have not properly confessed their sin; therefore they cannot be cleansed and fully forgiven.

If you want to mortify sin, John Owen wrote, “*Load thy conscience with the guilt of it.*” Contrary to the popular wisdom today, he believed the pangs of guilt were a natural and healthy consequence of wrongdoing. “*Be ashamed,*” he wrote, for he saw shame as an advantage in the mortification of sin. He correctly understood Paul’s meaning in 2 Cor 7:10+: “The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret.” Those who give a nod of the head to their guilt, claim the promise of forgiveness, quickly reassure themselves, and then think no more of their wrongdoing are subjecting themselves to the heart-hardening deceit of sin—especially when the sin threatens to become a habit. Let sorrow do its full work in your heart to produce a deep, honest repentance, and those sins will be severely weakened.

(5) Sin is not mortified when it is merely repressed. Some people use diversions to avoid dealing with their sin. They try to drown their conscience with alcohol or drown out their guilt with entertainment and other distractions. When temptation surfaces, they do not give a biblical answer, as Jesus did (Matt 4:4, 7, 10+). Instead they seek a fleshly escape route. Of this tendency Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,

“If you merely repress a temptation or this first motion of sin within you, it will probably come up again still more strongly. To that extent I agree with the modern psychology. Repression is always bad. “Well, what do you do?” asks someone. I answer: When you feel that first motion of sin, just pull yourself up and say, “Of course I am not having any dealings with this at all.” Expose the thing and say, “This is evil, this is vileness, this is the thing that drove the first man out of Paradise.” Pull it out, look at it, denounce it, hate it for what it is; then you have really dealt with it. You must not merely push it back in a spirit of fear, and in a timorous manner. Bring it out, expose it, and analyse it; and then denounce it for what it is until you hate it.”

That is sound advice. **Christians should deal with their sin courageously, striking at its head. Subduing it a little bit is not enough. They need to exterminate it, hack it in pieces—seek by the means of grace and the power of the Spirit to wring the deadly life from it.**

It is a lifelong task, in which progress will always be only gradual. That may make the fight seem daunting at first. But as soon as Christians set themselves to the work, they discover that sin shall not be master over them, for they are under grace (Rom 6:14+). That means it is God who is at work in them both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Phil 2:13NLT+). And having begun His good work in them, He “will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6+). (From [Mortification of Sin](#) Master’s Seminary Journal, 1994 - THE FULL ARTICLE IS 20 PAGES)

"Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers"

An Outline, Exposition and Summary

Greg Herrick

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- [6. To Mortify Sin—Negatively Considered](#)
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- [8. General Rule #1: A Man Must Be A Believer](#)
- [9. General Rule #2: There Must Be Universal Sincerity of Obedience](#)
- [10. Particular Direction #1: Consider Dangerous Symptoms Attending Sin](#)
- [11. Particular Direction #2: Get A Clear Sense of the Guilt of Sin](#)
- [12. Particular Direction #3-7: Guilt, Disposition, and Desire for Deliverance](#)

- [13. Particular Direction #8: Meditate on God's Greatness](#)
- [14. Particular Direction #9: How to Have Peace](#)
- [15. The Actual Practice of Mortification](#)

1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:9 κα περιεποισατο Σαουλ κα π ς λας τν Αγαγ ζντα κα τ γαθ τν ποιμνων κα τν βουκολων κα τν δεσμων κα τν μπελων κα πντων τν γαθν κα οκ βολετο ατ ξολεθρεσαι κα πν ργον τιμωμνον κα ξουδενωμνον ξωλθρευσαν

LXE 1 Samuel 15:9 And Saul and all the people saved Agag alive, and the best of the flocks, and of the herds, and of the fruits, of the vineyards, and of all the good things; and they would not destroy them: but every worthless and refuse thing they destroyed.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:9 However, Saul and the army spared Agag, along with the best of the flock, the cattle, the fatlings, and the lambs, as well as everything else that was of value. They were not willing to slaughter them. But they did slaughter everything that was despised and worthless.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:9 Saul and the troops spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, cattle, and choice animals, as well as the young rams and the best of everything else. They were not willing to destroy them, but they did destroy all the worthless and unwanted things.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs--everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:9 Saul and his men spared Agag's life and kept the best of the sheep and goats, the cattle, the fat calves, and the lambs-- everything, in fact, that appealed to them. They destroyed only what was worthless or of poor quality.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:9 Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the cattle and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was valuable, and would not utterly destroy them; all that was despised and worthless they utterly destroyed.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the army spared Agag with the best of the sheep and cattle, the fatlings and lambs and all that was good. They did not want to consign these to the curse of destruction; they consigned only what was poor and worthless.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:9 He and his troops spared Agag and the best of the fat sheep and oxen, and the lambs. They refused to carry out the doom on anything that was worthwhile, dooming only what was worthless and of no account.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:9 and Saul hath pity -- also the people -- on Agag, and on the best of the flock, and of the herd, and of the seconds, and on the lambs, and on all that is good, and have not been willing to devote them; and all the work, despised and wasted -- it they devoted.

- **the best:** 1Sa 15:3,15,19 Jos 7:21
- **the despised** 2Sa 6:13
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE ANIMALS

But - What is this contrasting with? The immediate phrase is "**utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.**" So this "**but**" introduces a strategic (and tragic) term of contrast, a change of direction, which would ultimately determine Saul's new destiny! Small hinge words like "**but**" open big doors of understanding, albeit, in this case the reality is this "hinge word" results in a "big door" being in effect closed to King Saul!

Saul and the people spared ([chamal](#); Lxx = [peripoieomai](#)) **Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good** - Here is the evidence of Saul (and the people's) disobedience. But given that Saul was the one to whom the instruction was given, Saul was the primary party guilty of disobeying the Word of the LORD. What was their motivation? In one word - covetousness or greed.

[Brian Bell](#) on best - The best of - Really? If the Lord says something is condemned, how can we say it's "the best"? Is.5:20 Woe to those who call evil good & good evil.

And were not willing to destroy them utterly ([charam](#)) - **NJB** = "They did not want to consign these to the curse of destruction" Why weren't they willing? Clearly the adjectives **best** and **good** tell us that these items appealed to the lust of their flesh, and to their greed. As the **NLT** says these were "everything that appealed to them." **Not willing** speaks of the people making a deliberate decision of their will to spare what was good.

[Bob Roe](#) - In Leviticus 27 anything that is "devoted to destruction" ([charam](#)), anything that God puts under the ban proscribed to be exterminated, is *already sacrificed to God, already belongs to Him*. It is not allowed to be used for sacrifice. So, the people are violating one of the principles of Scripture. **They are keeping what is God's already, giving it back to God and expecting him to give them brownie points.** What they are really saying is, "I am as smart as God. God made a mistake, and I am going to straighten Him out."

Rod Mattoon - In chapter thirteen, Saul is like a horse. He is running ahead of God. In this chapter, he is like a stubborn donkey and does not totally obey the Lord. Beloved, God expects from us 100% obedience. This is where our battleground is located. We battle for a balance in our life. We find ourselves tempted to run ahead of God or drag our feet in disobedience and delay. Saul spared King Agag. This would bring prestige to Saul. Saul's pride was preparing the way for major problems in the future. ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)

but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed ([charam](#); Lxx - [exoutheneo](#)) - This "utter destruction" was only partial destruction in the eyes of God. He was not playing horseshoes where getting close to the stake is of potential value!

Spared (have compassion, pity) ([02550](#)) [chamal](#) means to spare (to forbear to destroy, punish, or harm, refrain from attacking with necessary severity) or to have compassion ("had pity" Ex 2:6). Nathan told David, how the rich man spared ("unwilling") his own lamb (2Sa 12:4). The Babylonians would not "spare" arrows in their attack on Jerusalem (Jer 50:14). In Ezek 36:21, God said He had "concern (chamal)" for His holy Name. When preceded by the Hebrew negative particle (lo') [chamal](#) means to do something ruthlessly (Isa 30:14; Lam 2:2) or without any restraint (Jer. 50:14) [Chamal](#) " can take on the nuance of holding on to something, desiring it, such as holding evil in one's mouth (Job 20:13) or being unwilling to do something right or that is costly to oneself (2Sa 12:4)." (Baker) In Ezekiel (Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10; 16:5; 36:21) we see the repeated phrase that God will "have no pity" (Hebrew = *chus*) nor will He "spare" ([chamal](#)) Judah. From this it seems that [chamal](#) while expressing the attitude of compassion or pity, also describes "compassion in action" so to speak (albeit in all the Ezekiel passages it is used in a negative sense - God would NOT spare them!).

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

BGT 1 Samuel 15:10 καὶ γενέθη ἡ φωνὴ κυρίου πρὸς Σαμουὴλ λέγων

LXE 1 Samuel 15:10 And the word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying,

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

CSB 1 Samuel 15:10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel,

ESV 1 Samuel 15:10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel:

NIV 1 Samuel 15:10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

NLT 1 Samuel 15:10 Then the LORD said to Samuel,

NRS 1 Samuel 15:10 The word of the LORD came to Samuel:

NJB 1 Samuel 15:10 The word of Yahweh came to Samuel,

NAB 1 Samuel 15:10 Then the LORD spoke to Samuel:

YLT 1 Samuel 15:10 And the word of Jehovah is unto Samuel, saying,

- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Then - This marks an important progression in the narrative and is based upon the preceding facts regarding Saul's disobedience.

The word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying - The Judge of all mankind will state His case against King Saul.

1 Samuel 15:10-23 Unexpected Costs

According to *The Blunder Book* by M. Hirsh Goldberg, the company that won the bid to construct the 100 miles of track for the Washington, DC, subway system projected the cost to be \$793 million. When the job was completed, however, it cost \$6.6 billion. Goldberg said the same company that built the subway received a contract to build the Saudi Arabian city of Jubail. The initial estimate was \$9 billion. But when the project was finished, the bill came to \$45 billion. That's a cost overrun of \$36 billion!

These unexpected construction expenses are of little significance, however, compared with the unexpected costs of our sins against God. The life of King Saul shows us the enormous price of disobedience. He never figured that his continued willfulness and stubborn pride would eventually cost him his honor, his family, his friends, his influence for good, and his fellowship with God. He lost it all. He failed to see it coming when he decided to keep a few bleating sheep for his own pleasure and spare a wicked monarch (1 Samuel 15:14-15, 20-21). But these were costly acts of disobedience.

Father, help us to count the inevitable cost of failing to trust You today. And help us to remember the enormous price Christ paid on the cross for us. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sin's pleasures have such great appeal,
They always look like bargains rare;
But seldom do we clearly see
The hidden costs that we must bear.
—D. De Haan

Sin adds to your trouble, subtracts from your energy, and multiplies your difficulties.

1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:11 παρακ κλημαι τι βασιλευσα τ ν Σαουλ ε ς βασιλι α τι π στρεψεν π πισθ ν μου κα το ς λ γους μου ο κ τ ρησεν κα θ μησεν Σαμουηλ κα β ησεν πρ ς κ ριον λην τ ν ν κτα

LXE 1 Samuel 15:11 I have repented that I have made Saul to be king: for he has turned back from following me, and has not kept my word. And Samuel was grieved, and cried to the Lord all night.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I told him to do." Samuel became angry and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My instructions." So Samuel became angry and cried out to the LORD all night.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:11 "I am sorry that I ever made Saul king, for he has not been loyal to me and has refused to obey my command." Samuel was so deeply moved when he heard this that he cried out to the LORD all night.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret that I made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and has not carried out my commands." Samuel was angry; and he cried out to the LORD all night.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:11 'I regret having made Saul king, since he has broken his allegiance to me and not carried out my orders.' Samuel was appalled and cried to Yahweh all night long.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:11 "I regret having made Saul king, for he has turned from me and has not kept my command." At this Samuel grew angry and cried out to the LORD all night.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:11 'I have repented that I caused Saul to reign for king, for he hath turned back from after Me, and My words he hath not performed;' and it is displeasing to Samuel, and he crieth unto Jehovah all the night.

- **I regret:** 1Sa 15:35 Ge 6:6 2Sa 24:16 Ps 110:4 Jer 18:7-10 Am 7:3 Jon 3:10 4:2
- **turned:** Jos 22:16 1Ki 9:6 Ps 36:3 78:41,57 125:5 Zep 1:6 Mt 24:13 Heb 10:38
- **has not carried out My commands:** 1Sa 15:3,9 13:13
- **Samuel was distressed:** 1Sa 15:35 16:1 Ps 119:136 Jer 9:1,18 13:17 Lu 19:41-44 Ro 9:1-3
- **cried:** 1Sa 12:23 Ps 109:4 Mt 5:44 Lu 6:12
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

Genesis 6:5-7 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

1 Samuel 13:14+ "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself **a man after His own heart**, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

JEHOVAH'S VERDICT ON SAUL DRIVES SAMUEL TO HIS KNEES

"I regret ([nacham](#)) that I have made Saul king - NIV = "I am grieved" Can the heart of God be grieved? Absolutely! Sin grieves His heart! Sin grieves His Spirit (Eph 4:30+). This statement that Yahweh has **regret** or is grieved is an **anthropomorphism** which is the used of human terms to describe God ([see below](#)). (See [Does God Change His Mind?](#))

In Ezekiel 6:9+ God says "I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from me and by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols." While this statement in context refers to the reason God sent Judah into exile, note the similar thoughts as expressed by the Hebrews in this situation. In fact in 1Sa 15:23 Samuel declares to Saul his insubordination "is as iniquity and idolatry" the same sin the men of Judah were guilty of.

[Life Application Study Bible \(borrow\)](#) - When God said he was sorry that he had made Saul king, was he saying he had made a mistake? God's comment was an expression of sorrow, not an admission of error (Genesis 6:5-7). An omniscient God cannot make a mistake (15:29); therefore, God did not change his mind. He did, however, change his attitude toward Saul when Saul changed. Saul's heart no longer belonged to God but to his own interests.

for - Term of explanation. God does not need to explain any of His actions, but here He condescends to explain his **regret**.

He has turned back ([shub](#); [apostrepho](#)) from following Me and has not carried out My commands - Jehovah gives two reason for His regret - The first reason Yahweh was sorry He had made Saul king turned away from following Him. In effect his actions proved he was not loyal to Yahweh. Closely related is the second reason which was that he failed to obey the command to utterly destroy ALL (not some). Saul heard that command, but failed to heed that command and in so doing, in effect turned his back on

God as the ruler over his heart, choosing instead to be the "king" of his own heart. Jesus made it clear that "(ABSOLUTELY) No one can serve two masters; for (WHY NOT?) either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and wealth (mammon)." (Mt 6:24+) In effect Saul was despising God's Word and thus despising Him! There are only 2 paths every person can walk, one being to follow God (Jesus - cf Mk 8:34-38+) and the other being to follow self. Jehovah, the only One Who can see a person's heart, is declaring Saul's heart choose to follow the "god" of self and not the true and living God. What might this say about the state of Saul's eternal soul? I will not answer that question, but leave it for you to ponder. Ultimately we will have to wait until we arrive in Heaven. As someone once said we will be surprised at who is there and who is not there!

The Lxx translates **turned back** ([shub](#)) with [apostrepho](#) which in the active voice describes Saul making an intentional, volitional choice to turn away from Yahweh. The point is that Saul's actions (disobedience) were not an accidental "slip up," but a personal decision to rebel against his LORD.

SAMUEL'S HOLY INDIGNATION

And Samuel was distressed ([charah](#)) **and cried out to the LORD all night** - **ESV, CSB, NET** = "Samuel became angry" NIV = "troubled" As noted below the verb [charah](#) primarily describes **anger**. In fact **Leon Wood** (in the [TWOT](#)) makes the statement that "The Hebrew verb ([charah](#)) is always used in reference to anger." (cf the other 5 uses of [charah](#) in First Samuel = 1Sa 11:6, 1Sa 17:28, 1Sa 18:18, 1Sa 20:7, 1Sa 20:30 = all refer to anger). So it is hard to get away from the thought that Samuel's reaction to Yahweh's verdict was some degree of righteous anger (toward Saul of course, not God). The Septuagint has the verb *athumeo* which means to become disheartened to the extent of losing motivation, be discouraged, lose heart, become dispirited. But Samuel true to form, whether angry or disheartened, did not let that deter him from crying out to his LORD all night!

How many friends would you pray all night for?

[Guzik](#) - We are close to God's heart when the things that grieve Him grieve us, and the things that please God please us.

[Bob Roe](#) has an interesting comment - In verse 11 Samuel himself is greatly **distressed** that God regrets having made Saul king. Why? Samuel, a known prophet of God, has publicly anointed Saul and publicly declared to the people, "This is the king God has given you." Well, remember Samuel is oriental. He is Mideastern and "face" is very important to them. He has publicly proclaimed, "This is God's man." Now God has said, "This is not God's man." How does that make him look? The flesh is still the flesh even in a prophet of God.

Turned back (turn away) ([07725](#)) [shub/sub](#) s is a common verb (over 1000x) which has the basic meaning of the verb is movement back to the point of departure. Thus the idea is to turn, to return, to go back, to do again, to change, to withdraw, to bring back, to reestablish, to be returned, to bring back, to take, to restore, to recompense, to answer, to hinder.

Distressed (became angry) ([02734](#)) [charah](#) primarily refers to anger, to burn or be kindled with anger, and in the Hithpael, **charah** is used 4x (Ps 37:1, 7,8, Pr 24:19) always meaning "to worry" and describing the agitation, irritation or vexation resulting from active worry. **Charah** is used in reference to the anger of both man and God.

Norman Geisler - [When Critics Ask - scroll to page 126](#) **1 SAMUEL 15:11—How can God say that He regretted setting up Saul to be king in Israel?**

PROBLEM: After Saul had failed to carry out God's command to utterly destroy the Amalekites, God said to Samuel, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king" (1 Sam. 15:11). However, in 1 Samuel 15:29, Samuel states that God is not a man that He should repent. How can God say that He regretted setting up Saul as king when other passages assert that God does not repent or change His mind?

SOLUTION: The statement which God made to Samuel does not mean that God relented or changed His mind, but that God was expressing deep emotional sorrow over Saul's failure and the trouble that it would bring upon Israel. God selected Saul to be king in Israel to accomplish certain tasks for which Saul was well suited. To regret some course of action which had to be taken is an experience we have all had. God does not actually change His mind (see comments under Ex. 32:14), but He does experience deep emotional sorrow over the things which people do.

Gleason Archer - [Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties - Scroll to page 178](#)- In 1 Samuel 15:11 God is said to be sorry that He had ever set up Saul as king over Israel. Does this imply that God did not know in advance how poorly Saul would perform and that He

had made a mistake in choosing him in the first place? Could this be a mere human interpretation of God's feelings in this matter?

Even though God, who knows all things, surely knew in advance that Saul the son of Kish would utterly fail in his duties of kingship during the later years of his reign, He nevertheless saw fit to use Saul in his earlier years to deliver Israel from its pagan foes. Saul proved to be an effective leader in coping with the Ammonites, the Amalekites, and the Philistines and inspiring the Twelve Tribes to new courage and pride in their nationhood. But God foreknew that Saul would fall into disobedience and rebellion and that He would have to discard Saul completely in favor of David the son of Jesse. In fact, God made it clear through Jacob's deathbed prophecy (Gen. 49:8–10) that Judah was to supply the permanent royal line for the covenant nation of Israel. Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin, not Judah (as David was); so there could have been no doubt as to what God's choice would be.

Nevertheless, it was a matter of deep regret that Saul would disregard the instructions God had given him through Samuel and that he would substitute his own will for the revealed will of God. The Lord therefore said to Samuel, "I regret that I have made Saul king" (using the verb *niham*, a term that implies deep emotion and concern about a situation involving others). This does not imply that God was deceived in His expectations about Saul but only that He was deeply troubled about Saul and the suffering and failure that would come on Israel because her king had turned away from the path of obedience. Yet v.29 uses the same verb to state that God does not change His mind and adopt some plan other than that which He had originally conceived: "The Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind" (NASB). This statement was unquestionably made by the prophet Samuel under divine inspiration and does not represent some fallible human interpretation, either in v.11 or v.29. Two somewhat different meanings occur for *niham* in the one and same chapter—a not uncommon occurrence in Hebrew words with two or more meanings.

QUESTION - [What is an anthropomorphism?](#)

ANSWER - The word anthropomorphism comes from two Greek words, *anthropos*, meaning "man," and *morphe*, meaning "form." In theological terms, anthropomorphism is making God in some way into the form of man. Mostly, it is the process of assigning human characteristics to God. Human traits and actions such as talking, holding, reaching, feeling, hearing, and the like, all of which are chronicled throughout both the Old and New Testaments, are ascribed to the Creator. We read of God's actions, emotions, and appearance in human terms, or at least in words we normally accept and associate with humans.

In several places in the Bible, God is described as having the physical attributes of man. He "sets [his] face" against evil (Leviticus 20:6); the Lord will make "His face" to shine on you (Numbers 6:25); He "stretched out his hand" (Exodus 7:5; Isaiah 23:11), and God scattered enemies with His strong arm (Psalm 89:10). He "stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth" (Psalm 113:6). He "keeps his eye" on the land (Deuteronomy 11:12), the "eyes of the Lord" are on the righteous (Psalm 34:15), and the earth is His "footstool" (Isaiah 66:1). Do all these verses mean that God literally has eyes, a face, hands and feet? Not necessarily. God is spirit, not flesh and blood, but because we are not spirit, these anthropomorphisms help us to understand God's nature and actions.

Human emotions are also ascribed to God: He was "sorry" (Genesis 6:6), "jealous" (Exodus 20:5), "moved to pity" (Judges 2:18), and "grieved" over making Saul Israel's first king (1 Samuel 15:35). We read that the Lord "changed His mind" (Exodus 32:14), "relented" (2 Samuel 24:16), and will "remember" when He sees a rainbow in the sky (Genesis 9:16). God is "angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11), and He "burned with anger" against Job's friends (Job 32:5). Most precious to us is God's love, in which He predestines us to salvation (Ephesians 1:4-5) and because of which He gave His only Son in order to save the world (John 3:16).

Anthropomorphisms can be helpful in enabling us to at least partially comprehend the incomprehensible, know the unknowable, and fathom the unfathomable. But God is God, and we are not, and all of our human expressions are intrinsically inadequate in explaining fully and properly the divine. But human words, emotions, features, and knowledge are all that our Creator provided us, so these are all that we can understand in this earthly world at this time.

Yet anthropomorphisms can be dangerous if we see them as sufficient to portray God in limited human traits and terms, which could unintentionally serve to diminish in our minds His incomparable and incomprehensible power, love, and mercy. Christians are advised to read God's Word with the realization that He offers a small glimpse of His glory through the only means we can absorb. As much as anthropomorphisms help us picture our loving God, He reminds us in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."GotQuestions.org

1 Samuel 15:12 Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:12 κα ρθρισεν Σαμουηλ κα πορεθη ες π νησιν Ισραηλ πρω κα πηγγλη τ Σαμουηλ λ γοντες κει Σαουλ ες Κ ρμηλον κα ν στακεν ατ χερα κα π στρεψεν τ ρμα κα κατ βη ες Γαλγαλα πρ ς Σαουλ κα δο ατ ς ν φερεν λοκατωσιν τ κυρ τ πρ τα τ ν σκ λων ν νεγκεν ξ Αμαληκ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:12 And Samuel rose early and went to meet Israel in the morning, and it was told Saul, saying, Samuel has come to Carmel, and he has raised up help for himself: and he turned his chariot, and came down to Galgala to Saul; and, behold, he was offering up a whole-burnt-offering to the Lord, the chief of the spoils which he brought out of Amalec.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:12 Then Samuel got up early to meet Saul the next morning. But Samuel was informed, "Saul has gone to Carmel where he is setting up a monument for himself. Then Samuel left and went down to Gilgal."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:12 Early in the morning Samuel got up to confront Saul, but it was reported to Samuel, "Saul went to Carmel where he set up a monument for himself. Then he turned around and went down to Gilgal."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:12 And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:12 Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:12 Early the next morning Samuel went to find Saul. Someone told him, "Saul went to the town of Carmel to set up a monument to himself; then he went on to Gilgal."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:12 Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, and Samuel was told, "Saul went to Carmel, where he set up a monument for himself, and on returning he passed on down to Gilgal."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:12 In the morning, Samuel set off to find Saul. Samuel was told, 'Saul has been to Carmel, to raise himself a monument there, but now has turned about, moved on and gone down to Gilgal.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:12 Early in the morning he went to meet Saul, but was informed that Saul had gone to Carmel, where he erected a trophy in his own honor, and that on his return he had passed on and gone down to Gilgal.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:12 And Samuel riseth early to meet Saul in the morning, and it is declared to Samuel, saying, 'Saul hath come in to Carmel, and lo, he is setting up to himself a monument, and goeth round, and passeth over, and goeth down to Gilgal.'

- **Carmel:** 1Sa 25:2 Jos 15:55 1Ki 18:42
- **set up a monument:** 1Sa 7:12 Jos 4:8,9 2Sa 18:18
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

2 Samuel 18:18 Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and **set up for himself a pillar** which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So **he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's Monument to this day.**



See Gilgal Just to West of Jordan River

THE CRUCIAL MEETING OF PROPHET AND KING

Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul - Samuel must have been exhausted having cried to the LORD the entire night.

And it was told Samuel - NET = "But Samuel was informed." Who told Samuel we are not told.

Saying, "Saul came to Carmel" - This is not Mount Carmel of Elijah's day (cf 1Ki 18:20ff), but the city of Carmel located in the territory of Judah about 7 miles south of Hebron (see map above for Hebron located just west of the Dead Sea) and on Saul's route home after defeating the Amalekites. Saul decided to stop and set up a trophy in light of his victory.

and behold (hinneh), he set up a monument (yad) for himself - NIV = "set up a monument in his own honor" NJB = "to raise himself a monument" NAB = "he erected a trophy in his own honor" If this were not the inspired Word of God, it would be difficult to believe this statement. But it is prefaced with a "**behold**" calculated to get our attention, and that it does! Saul made a monument to SELF, which is another sign of Saul's crumbling spiritual character.

What a sad, striking contrast Saul makes with Samuel who made a memorial in 1Sa 7:12+ "Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, **"Thus far the LORD has helped us"** Saul's monument said **"Thus far as Saul helped us!"** Woe! **THOUGHT - Which monument have you set up in your life - one like Saul or one like Samuel?** God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6+). It's too bad the proverbs were not yet written when Saul reigned! Pr 18:12 says "Before destruction the heart of man is **haughty**, But humility goes before honor." Pr 11:2 says "When **pride** comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom." Pr 16:18 says "**Pride** goes before destruction, And a **haughty** spirit before stumbling." Pr 29:23 "A man's **pride** will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor. "

Gordon: "After his victory over the Amalekites Moses raised an altar (Ex. 17:15f.); Saul in a fit of apparent self-congratulation erects a **stele** (lit. 'hand'; cf. Absalom's monument, 2 Sa. 18:18)." (Borrow [1 & 2 Samuel](#))

Life Application Study Bible (borrow) - Saul built a monument in honor of himself. What a contrast to Moses and Joshua, who gave all the credit to God.

THOUGHT - When you experience success, spiritual or secular, to whom do you "set up a monument" - God or Self?

TSK has an explanation for **monument** which is literally the Hebrew word for "hand" - **Yad**, literally means (as the LXX. render [cheira,]) a hand; probably because the trophy or monument of victory was in the shape of a large hand, the emblem of power, erected on a pillar. These memorial pillars were anciently much in use; and the figure of a hand, by its emblematical meaning, was well adapted to preserve the remembrance of a victory. Niebuhr, speaking of the Mesjed Ali, or Mosque of Ali, says that, "at the top of the dome, where one generally sees on the Turkish mosques a crescent, or only a pole, there is here a **hand** stretched out, to represent that of Ali." Another writer informs us, that at the Alhamra, or red palace of the Moorish kings in Grenada, "on the keystone of the outward arch [of the present principal entrance] is sculptured the figure of an arm, the symbol of strength and dominion."

What a difference from the words of Saul in 1Sa 9:21 (in response to Samuel's announcement in 1Sa 9:19-20) "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you

speak to me in this way?" Can a humble person grow into a prideful person? That is a rhetorical question as Saul is a perfect illustration of this tragic change in one's heart from humility to pridefulness. Saul is no longer the same man who hid in the baggage (1Sa 10:22) the day he was anointed king, but is now into "[self-promotion](#)."

MacArthur - Saul, apparently taking credit for the victory, established a **monument** to himself (cf. Absalom in 2Sa 18:18). This foolish act of contemptible pride was Saul's expression of self-worship rather than true worship of God and another evidence of his spiritual weakness. (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Brian Bell - In the eyes of the soldiers & the Jewish people, Saul had won a great victory over a long-time enemy, but in God's eyes he was a failure. Yet the king was so impressed w/himself that he went to Carmel & erected a monument in his own honor. (wonder what it looked like?) Seems like God says, "**enough is enough**". **Have you erected any "Me Monuments?"** - maybe a spiritual trophy room. Where, you invite friends to come visit your spiritual exploits: like souls you've won to Christ; ministries you've run. **Fine line between boasting in God & boasting in self.** - Fine line between erecting an **Ebenezer stone of remembrance & your own me monument!** Archeologist found this monument, it read "Saul, he's da man, Saul, he's da man!":) j

Then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal - Saul was not still at Carmel, but returned to the very place Samuel had crowned Saul king! And it is probably no coincidence that Gilgal was the site of Samuel's first confrontation of Saul (1Sa 13:7-15+).

TECHNICAL NOTE - NET NOTE - (SEE [ALSO LXE ABOVE](#)) At the end of v. 12 the LXX and one Old Latin MS include the following words not found in the MT: "to Saul. And behold, he was offering as a burnt offering to the LORD the best of the spoils that he had brought from the Amalekites."

CARMEL - (NOT MOUNT CARMEL FURTHER NORTH AND WEST) A city of Judah, in the uplands near Hebron ([MAP](#)), named with Maon and Ziph (Joshua 15:55). Here Saul for some reason not stated set up a monument or trophy (1 Samuel 15:12; literally "hand"). It was the home of Nabal the churlish and drunken flockmaster, whose widow Abigail David married (1 Samuel 25); and also of Hezro, one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:35 1 Chronicles 11:37). It is represented by the modern el-Karmil, about 10 miles to the Southeast of Hebron. Karmil is the pronunciation given me by several natives this spring. There are considerable ruins, the most outstanding feature being square tower dating from the 12th century, now going swiftly to ruin. There are also caves, tombs and a large reservoir.

1 Samuel 15:13 Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:13 κα παρεγ νετο Σαμουηλ πρ ς Σαουλ κα ε πεν α τ Σαουλ ε λογητ ς σ τ κυρ σθησα π ντα σα λ λησεν κ ριος

LXE 1 Samuel 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said to him, Blessed art thou of the Lord: I have performed all that the Lord said.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel came to him, Saul said to him, "May the LORD bless you! I have done what the LORD said."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel came to him, Saul said, "May the LORD bless you. I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:13 And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel finally found him, Saul greeted him cheerfully. "May the LORD bless you," he said. "I have carried out the LORD's command!"

NRS 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel came to Saul, Saul said to him, "May you be blessed by the LORD; I have carried out the command of the LORD."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel reached Saul, Saul said, 'May you be blessed by Yahweh! I have carried

out Yahweh's orders.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:13 When Samuel came to him, Saul greeted him: "The LORD bless you! I have kept the command of the LORD."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:13 And Samuel cometh in unto Saul, and Saul saith to him, 'Blessed art thou of Jehovah; I have performed the word of Jehovah.'

- **Blessed:** 1Sa 13:10 Ge 14:19 Jdg 17:2 Ru 3:10
- **I have carried out:** 1Sa 15:9,11 Ge 3:12 Pr 27:2 28:13 30:13 31:31 Lu 17:10 18:11
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL'S AMAZING IGNORANCE OR SELF-DECEPTION

Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD!" - Saul is so self-deceived (which is one of the major effects of sin - Heb 3:13+) that he is oblivious to his obvious sin (which is even making noise in next verse!) that he saunters out as if nothing has transpired. He thinks he has won a great victory, when in fact he had just achieved a great failure!

Brian Bell on Saul's blessing - Saul's greeting - sheer hypocrisy. He had no blessing to bring. He had not performed the will of the Lord.

I have carried out the command of the LORD- True, he had carried out part of the command, which in his deceived heart was equated with "mission accomplished!" Saul was out of touch with reality!

Saul substituted saying for doing!

-- Warren Wiersbe

Rod Mattoon says Saul "sounds so religious as he speaks with what I call spiritual syrup. He sounds so sweet but this was a rotten, stinking lie. Saul deceives himself most of all. He has rationalized his disobedience, thinking all is OK but it is not. Saul has substituted talking for walking or action. Saul had not performed the command to utterly destroy everything. He claimed to be obedient when he really was disobedient and rebellious. Samuel knew he was lying because he could hear the animals. We struggle with the same problem as Saul. It is easy for us to replace action with mere words. James addressed this issue. James 1:22+—But **be** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." No one ever climbed a hill by just looking at it. Andrew Carnegie said, "As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say, I just watch what they do!" Horace Mann said, "I have never heard about the resolutions of the apostles, but a great deal about their ACTS!" Three times in the first chapter of the epistle of First John, John refers to saying one thing and doing another. See the pathetic pattern * lying to others 1Jn 1:6+ * lying to selves 1Jn 1:8+ * lying to God 1Jn 1:10+ ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)

Alexander Maclaren on **I have carried out the command of the LORD** - That is more than true obedience is quick to say. If Saul had done it, he would have been slower to boast of it.

1 Samuel 15:13-23 Got Moles?

While cutting our grass, I spotted rounded mounds of sandy loam on what had recently been a smooth lawn. A family of moles had emigrated from nearby woods to take up residence beneath our yard. The little creatures were wreaking havoc with our lawn by burrowing into the soil and disrupting the beautiful turf.

In some ways the activity of moles illustrates the dark side of the human heart. On the surface, we may appear polished and polite. But greed, lust, bigotry, and addictions can work inner destruction. Sooner or later, those sins will become apparent.

King Saul had a fatal flaw that festered beneath the surface—rebellion against God. He had been commanded not to take any of the spoils of war from the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15:3). But after a decisive victory, he let the Israelites keep the best of the livestock for themselves (v.9).

When the prophet Samuel confronted the king, Saul rationalized that he had kept the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to God. But this was a mere cover for his sinful pride, which had erupted in defiance of the God he claimed to serve.

God's remedy for rebellion is confession and repentance. Like Saul, you may be rationalizing your sin. Confess and forsake it before it's too late.—Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God wants complete obedience—
Excuses will not do;
His Word and Spirit point the way
As we His will pursue.
—Sper

One sin becomes two when it is defended.

1 Samuel 15:14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

BGT 1 Samuel 15:14 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ κα τ ς φων το ποιμν ου το του ν το ς σ ν μου κα φων τ ν βο ν ν γ κο ω

LXE 1 Samuel 15:14 And Samuel said, What then is the bleating of this flock in my ears, and the sound of the oxen which I hear?

KJV 1 Samuel 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?

NET 1 Samuel 15:14 Samuel replied, "If that is the case, then what is this sound of sheep in my ears and the sound of cattle that I hear?"

CSB 1 Samuel 15:14 Samuel replied, "Then what is this sound of sheep and cattle I hear?"

ESV 1 Samuel 15:14 And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?"

NIV 1 Samuel 15:14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

NLT 1 Samuel 15:14 "Then what is all the bleating of sheep and goats and the lowing of cattle I hear?" Samuel demanded.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of cattle that I hear?"

NJB 1 Samuel 15:14 Samuel replied, 'Then what is this bleating of sheep in my ears and the lowing of cattle that I hear?'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:14 But Samuel asked, "What, then, is the meaning of this bleating of sheep that comes to my ears, and the lowing of oxen that I hear?"

YLT 1 Samuel 15:14 And Samuel saith, 'And what is the noise of this flock in mine ears -- and the noise of the herd which I am hearing?'

- **What:** Ps 36:2 50:16-21 Jer 2:18,19,22,23,34-37 Mal 3:13-15 Lu 19:22 Ro 3:19 1Co 4:5
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WHAT DO THE SOUNDS OF ANIMALS MEAN?

But - A dramatic contrast. Saul's self-deception is now countered with Samuel's reality testing!

Life Application Study Bible (borrow) - Dishonest people soon begin to believe the lies they construct around themselves. Then they lose the ability to tell the difference between truth and lies. By believing your own lies, you deceive yourself, you alienate yourself from God, and you lose credibility in all your relationships. In the long run, honesty wins out.

Samuel said - Woe! You can almost sense the tone of Samuel's response to Saul's friendly blessing and claim of obedience.

Blaikie on bleating - "Facts are stubborn things, and they make quick work of sophistry."

What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear([shama](#))? - Saul cannot muffle the

prize animals taken from the Amalekites! It is difficult to hide your sin when it is **bleating** or **lowing**! And, beloved, from my experience, sin does have a way of "making noise" others can detect!

THOUGHT - We can try to muffle the cries of our sin, but they will eventually cry out. This is why we must continually seek to keep short accounts with God and quickly cry out and confess to Him, seeking and receiving His forgiveness. Otherwise we fall into the pit described by Proverbs 28:13+ "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." When we try to cover our sin, we also need to remember Nu 32:23+ which warns us "**behold**, you have sinned against the LORD, and **be sure your sin will find you out**" I cannot lie - that is not my favorite verse! 1 John 1:9+ on the other hand is one of my "go to" verses for obvious reasons!

Guzik - Pride and disobedience make us blind—or deaf—to our sin. What was completely obvious to Samuel was invisible to Saul. We all have blind spots of sin in our lives, and we need to constantly ask God to show them to us. We need to sincerely pray the prayer of Psalm 139:23–24: Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

THE INSIGHT OF SAMUEL 15:14–23

A. The BLEATING of the Sheep vs. 14–19

B. The BLAMING of Saul vs. 20–23

1 Samuel 15:15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:15 κα ε πεν Σαουλ ξ Αμαληκ νεγκα α τ περιεποι σατο λα ρ τ κρ πιστα το ποιμν ου κα τ ν βο ν πως τυθ τ κυρ θε σου κα τ λοιπ ξωλ θρευσα

LXE 1 Samuel 15:15 And Saul said, I have brought them out of Amalec, that which the people preserved, even the best of the sheep, and of the cattle, that it might be sacrificed to the Lord thy God, and the rest have I utterly destroyed.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul said, "They were brought from the Amalekites; the army spared the best of the flocks and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD our God. But everything else we slaughtered."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul answered, "The troops brought them from the Amalekites and spared the best sheep and cattle in order to offer a sacrifice to the LORD your God, but the rest we destroyed."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:15 "It's true that the army spared the best of the sheep, goats, and cattle," Saul admitted. "But they are going to sacrifice them to the LORD your God. We have destroyed everything else."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the cattle, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul said, 'They have been brought from Amalek, the people having spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice them to Yahweh, your God; the rest we have consigned to the curse of destruction.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:15 Saul replied: "They were brought from Amalek. The men spared the best sheep and oxen to sacrifice to the LORD, your God; but we have carried out the ban on the rest."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:15 And Saul saith, 'From Amalek they have brought them, because the people had pity on the best of the flock, and of the herd, in order to sacrifice to Jehovah thy God, and the remnant we have devoted.'

- **for:** 1Sa 15:9,21 Ge 3:12,13 Ex 32:22,23 Job 31:33 Pr 28:13
- **to:** Mt 2:8 Lu 10:29
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

EXCUSE NUMBER ONE "THEY DID IT!"

Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God. - Note the statement **"they have brought them"** and **"the people spared"** so that Saul avoids taking personal responsibility for the bleating sheep, etc. And then he rationalizes it (or justifies his disobedience) by saying they did it for **the LORD**, in order to sacrifice to Him. This would be like Al Capone saying he was going to donate some of his filthy money to the church for the work of the LORD. It is what we would call "dirty money" and the sheep and oxen are "unclean" clean animals, unclean because they should have already been "devoted" (this is one of the meanings of utterly destroy - [charam](#)) to the LORD.

Note the phrase **the LORD your God** - This phrase is used 3 times by Saul in this chapter (1Sa 15:15, 21, 30). Surely this speaks volumes about his personal relationship with Jehovah! All the people of Israel had used the same description of God when they had asked Samuel to pray for them "Pray for your servants to the LORD **YOUR** God, so we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king." (1Sa 12:19+).

THOUGHT - What a contrast Saul is with David, a man after God's own heart, who declared "The LORD is **MY** rock and **MY** fortress and **MY** deliverer, **MY** GOD, **MY** Rock, in Whom I take refuge; **MY** shield and the horn of **MY** salvation, **MY** stronghold." (Psalm 18:2) Eight times David referred to God using the personal possessive pronoun **MY!** What say you dear reader...**YOUR** God or **MY** God?

[Guzik](#) comments that "The LORD was not Saul's God. Saul was Saul's God. The Lord was the God of Samuel, not Saul. In his pride, Saul removed the Lord God from the throne of his heart."

Rod Mattoon - Samuel more or less says "You performed what? I hear sheep! Don't lie to me boy!" This brings us to Saul's next substitution. Saul replaces confession and admission of disobedience and sin with a bunch of worthless excuses. Saul says, "I spared the best animals for a sacrifice to the Lord!" This first excuse reminds us that it is never right (sacrifice to the Lord), to do wrong (keep the animals), in order to do right (sacrifice to the Lord). Common statements that are made by folks today are.... "I am doing this for the Lord or God lead me to do this!" when what they are doing contradicts the Bible. Beloved, God never leads us to contradict and disobey His Word! He does not contradict His own Word! In Saul's case, "How could God bless a sacrifice that He has condemned?" ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)

MacArthur on your God - Saul's blatant disobedience at least pained his conscience so that he could not claim God as his God. (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

What a contrast is Saul "a man after man's heart" and David "a man after God's heart" - Saul says "YOUR GOD" three times in chapter 15. In striking contrast David says "**MY**" (first person, possessive pronoun) 8 times in 1 verse!

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is **MY** rock and **MY** fortress and **MY** deliverer, **MY** God, **MY** rock, in whom I take refuge; **MY** shield and the horn of **MY** salvation, **MY** stronghold.

THOUGHT - Dear reader, is your declaration more like Saul or more like David? Your answer, reveals the state of your heart!

but the rest we have utterly destroyed ([charam](#)) - Note the "**we**" indicating he now includes himself in the "obedience." This is weak rationalization at best, complete lying at the worst. **Utter destruction** meant total destruction, not partial.

[Bob Roe](#) on the pronouns **THEY** and **WE** - Notice again how beautifully the flesh rationalizes, how it never accepts responsibility for its actions. Saul says, "**WE** carried out the command of the Lord, but **THEY** spared the best." Typically the flesh will obey God as long as it does not cost anything. The people didn't mind killing the men, women, children, infants and worthless of the flocks, but when it came to the best of the flocks what happened? This is when the flesh will never obey God. When it really costs what you want, then the flesh springs into action. That is exactly what you see here.

[Guzik](#) on **the rest we have utterly destroyed** - As it turned out, not even this was true. There were still Amalekites left alive. David later had to deal with the Amalekites (1Sa 27:8+, 1Sa 30:1+, 2Sa 8:12). [Haman](#), the evil man who tried to wipe out all the Jewish people in the days of Esther, was a descendant of Agag (Esther 3:1+). Most ironic of all, when Saul was killed on the field of battle, an Amalekite claimed to deliver the final thrust of the sword (2 Samuel 1:8-10). **When we don't obey God completely, the "left over" portion will surely come back and trouble us, if not kill us.**

Brian Bell - Saul lied to himself(thinking he could get away w/this deception); to Samuel(who already knew the truth); & to God(by saying he spared the animals for sacrifice). 1. With Saul, it was always somebody else's fault. Note: They, the people, we (1Sa 15:15,21) He was commander-in-chief, he could have controlled them.

Rising To The Top

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. — Philipians 2:3

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:17-30

"Lacks ambition." That is not a phrase you want to see on your performance review. When it comes to work, employees who lack ambition seldom rise to the top of an organization. Without a strong desire to achieve something, nothing is accomplished. Ambition, however, has a dark side. It often has more to do with elevating self than with accomplishing something noble for others.

This was the case with many of the kings of Israel, including the first one. Saul started out with humility, but he gradually came to consider his position as something that belonged to him. He forgot that he had a special assignment from God to lead His chosen people in a way that would show other nations the way to God. When God relieved him of duty, Saul's only concern was for himself (1 Sam. 15:30).

In a world where ambition often compels people to do whatever it takes to rise to positions of power over others, God calls His people to a new way of living. We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition (Phil. 2:3) and to lay aside the weight of sin that ensnares us (Heb. 12:1).

If you want to be someone who truly "rises up," make it your ambition to humbly love and serve God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Rise up, O men of God!
Have done with lesser things:
Give heart and mind and soul and strength
To serve the King of kings.
—Merrill

Ambition is short-sighted if our focus is not on God.

1 Samuel 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, 'Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.' And he said to him, 'Speak!'

BGT 1 Samuel 15:16 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ πρ ς Σαουλ νες κα παγγελ σοι λ λησεν κ ριος πρ ς με τ ν ν κτα
κα ε πεν α τ λ λησον

LXE 1 Samuel 15:16 And Samuel said to Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord has said to me this night: and he said to him, Say on.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Wait a minute! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." Saul said to him, "Tell me."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:16 "Stop!" exclaimed Samuel. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," he replied.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me this night." And he said to him, "Speak."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:16 "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! Listen to what the LORD told me last night!" "What did he tell you?" Saul asked.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! I will tell you what the LORD said to me last night." He replied, "Speak."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:16 Samuel then said to Saul, 'Stop! Let me tell you what Yahweh said to me last night.' He said, 'Go on.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:16 Samuel said to Saul: "Stop! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Speak!" he replied.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:16 And Samuel saith unto Saul, 'Desist, and I declare to thee that which Jehovah hath spoken unto me to-night;' and he saith to him, 'Speak.'

- Stay: 1Sa 9:27 12:7 1Ki 22:16
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

UH-OH! HERE COME'S THE HAMMER!

To [drop the hammer](#) means to punish someone, to crackdown on a certain violation or injustice!

Then Samuel said to Saul, "**Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.**" - **ESV**, et al = "**Stop!**" BE QUIET! Samuel is teeing up the ball so to speak and he is getting ready the ball with his biggest driver!" What he was about to say was not his opinion, but God's verdict.

And he said to him, "Speak!" - It is difficult to tell if Saul is so self-deceived that he is really eager to hear what the LORD had to say. Note Samuel does not say that it was related to him, so he may even be thinking that this was some positive news.

1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel,

BGT 1 Samuel 15:17 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ πρ ς Σαουλ ο χ μικρ ς σ ε ν πιον α το γο μενος σκ ππρου φυλ ς Ισραηλ κα χρισ ν σε κ ριος ε ς βασιλ α π Ισραηλ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:17 And Samuel said to Saul, Art thou not little in his eyes, though a leader of one of the tribes of Israel? and yet the Lord anointed thee to be king over Israel.

KJV 1 Samuel 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?

NET 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said, "Is it not true that when you were insignificant in your own eyes, you became head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD chose you as king over Israel.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel continued, "Although you once considered yourself unimportant, have you not become the leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel

ESV 1 Samuel 15:17 And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:17 And Samuel told him, "Although you may think little of yourself, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD has anointed you king of Israel.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said, 'Small as you may be in your own eyes, are you not the leader of the tribes of Israel? Yahweh has anointed you as king of Israel.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel then said: "Though little in your own esteem, are you not leader of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king of Israel

YLT 1 Samuel 15:17 And Samuel saith, 'Art not thou, if thou art little in thine own eyes, head of the tribes of

Israel? and Jehovah doth anoint thee for king over Israel,

- **When:** 1Sa 9:21 10:22 Jdg 6:15 Ho 13:1 Mt 18:4
- the Lord: 1Sa 15:1-3 10:1
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 9:21+ Saul replied, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?"

1 Samuel 10:22+ Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."

SAMUEL FIRST SPEAKS OF THE PAST FAVOR OF GOD

Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes (1Sa 9:21+), you were made the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel - Samuel begins with two rhetorical questions to which Saul could only answer affirmatively. This is clearly an allusion to Saul's current sin, the root of pride, which had brought forth evil fruit. Saul was not "big" in his own eyes!

THOUGHT - The problem with pride and us growing bigger in our own eyes, is that, by default, Jesus will grow smaller. The throne in our heart has only one chair and Jesus must sit on that throne! Is He your King?

Underestimating Ourselves

Samuel said, "Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel." 1 Samuel 15:17

Today's Scripture & Insight: 1 Samuel 15:10–18

The young man became his team's captain. The professional sports squad was now led by a mild-mannered kid who barely needed to shave. His first press conference was underwhelming. He kept deferring to the coach and to his teammates, and mumbled clichés about just trying to do his job. The team performed poorly that season, and by the end of it the young captain had been traded. He didn't grasp that he'd been entrusted with the authority to lead, or maybe he never believed he could.

Due to his failures, Saul was "small in [his] own eyes" (1 Samuel 15:17)—which is a funny thing to say about a guy who's described as being tall. He was literally head and shoulders above the rest (9:2). And yet that wasn't how he saw himself. In fact, his actions in the chapter show him trying to win the approval of the people. He hadn't fully grasped that God—not people—had chosen him and given him a mission.

But Saul's mistake is a picture of every human being's failure: we can miss that we were made in God's image to reflect His rule, and end up misusing our authority—spreading destruction in the world. To undo this, we need to return to God: to let the Father define us by His love, to let Him fill us with the Spirit, and to let Jesus send us out into the world. By: Glenn Packiam ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What assignment has God given you that you don't think you have the power to do? Why is it vital to have your identity based in what God says is true?

Dear Father, give me eyes to see myself as You see me, and grant me the grace to faithfully carry out the calling You've entrusted to me.

The Slippery Slope Of Success

When you were little in your own eyes, . . . did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? —1 Samuel 15:17

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-23

Among the more than 19,000 original epigrams penned by chemist and writer Dr. O. A. Battista is this wise observation: "You have

reached the pinnacle of success as soon as you become uninterested in money, compliments, or publicity.” Unfortunately, just the opposite often happens when something we have done is praised and rewarded. A humble heart can quickly become a swelled head.

Just before Saul was anointed king, he saw himself as a member of an insignificant family in the smallest tribe of Israel (1 Sam. 9:21). Within a few years, however, he had erected a monument in his own honor and had become the supreme authority for his conduct (15:11-12). The prophet Samuel confronted Saul for his disobedience to God by reminding him, “When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel?” (v.17).

Self-importance is the first step down the slippery slope of what we call success. It begins when we claim credit for God-given victories and modify His commands to suit our desires.

True success is staying on God’s path by following His Word and giving Him praise instead of craving it for ourselves. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me, O Lord, lest my heart become proud,
For all of my talents by You are endowed;
Nothing I have can I claim as my own—
What mercy and grace in my life You have shown!
—D. De Haan

True humility credits God for every success.

1 Samuel 15:18 and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.'

BGT 1 Samuel 15:18 κα π στείλ ν σε κ ριος ν δ̄ κα ε π ν σοι πορε θητι κα ξολ θρευσον το ς μαρτ νοντας ε ς μ τ ν Αμαληκ κα πολεμ σεις α το ς ως συντελ σ ς α το ς

LXE 1 Samuel 15:18 And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said to thee, Go, and utterly destroy: thou shalt slay the sinners against me, even the Amalekites; and thou shalt war against them until thou have consumed them.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:18 The LORD sent you on a campaign saying, 'Go and exterminate those sinful Amalekites! Fight against them until you have destroyed them.'

CSB 1 Samuel 15:18 and then sent you on a mission and said: 'Go and completely destroy the sinful Amalekites. Fight against them until you have annihilated them.'

ESV 1 Samuel 15:18 And the LORD sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

NIV 1 Samuel 15:18 And he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.'

NLT 1 Samuel 15:18 And the LORD sent you on a mission and told you, 'Go and completely destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, until they are all dead.'

NRS 1 Samuel 15:18 And the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'

NJB 1 Samuel 15:18 When Yahweh sent you on a mission he said to you, "Go and put those sinners, the Amalekites, under the curse of destruction and make war on them until they are exterminated."

NAB 1 Samuel 15:18 and sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and put the sinful Amalekites under a ban of destruction. Fight against them until you have exterminated them.'

YLT 1 Samuel 15:18 and Jehovah sendeth thee in the way, and saith, Go, and thou hast devoted the sinners, the Amalekite, and fought against them till they are consumed;

- the sinners: Ge 13:13 15:16 Nu 16:38 Job 31:3 Pr 10:29 13:21
- they be consumed: Heb. they consume them
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL NOW ADDRESSES THE PRESENT CHARGE FROM GOD

and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go and utterly destroy ([charam](#); Lxx - [exoletreuo](#)) the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated' - Note 4 actions were required - go, utterly destroy, fight, exterminate. There is no response recorded from Saul regarding Samuel's reminder of Yahweh's clear command. Note the emphasis on **utterly destroy** and **exterminated** leaving no doubt that Saul was to leave no survivors. Samuel presumably expects an affirmative response from Saul, but he doesn't give him time to reply.

1 Samuel 15:19 "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

BGT 1 Samuel 15:19 καὶ νᾶ τ ο κ κουσας τ ς φων ς κυρ ου λλ ρμησας το θ σθαι π τ σκ λα κα πο ησας τ πονηρ ν ν πιον κυρ ου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:19 And why didst not thou hearken to the voice of the Lord, but didst haste to fasten upon the spoils, and didst that which was evil in the sight of the Lord?

KJV 1 Samuel 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?

NET 1 Samuel 15:19 Why haven't you obeyed the LORD? Instead you have greedily rushed upon the plunder! You have done what is wrong in the LORD's estimation."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:19 So why didn't you obey the LORD? Why did you rush on the plunder and do what was evil in the LORD's sight?"

ESV 1 Samuel 15:19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

NIV 1 Samuel 15:19 Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"

NLT 1 Samuel 15:19 Why haven't you obeyed the LORD? Why did you rush for the plunder and do what was evil in the LORD's sight?"

NRS 1 Samuel 15:19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

NJB 1 Samuel 15:19 Why then did you not obey Yahweh's voice? Why did you fall on the booty and do what is wrong in Yahweh's eyes?'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:19 Why then have you disobeyed the LORD? You have pounced on the spoil, thus displeasing the LORD."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:19 and why hast thou not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah -- and dost fly unto the spoil, and dost do the evil thing in the eyes of Jehovah?'

- fly upon: Pr 15:27 Jer 7:11 Hab 2:9-12 2Ti 4:10
- didst evil: 2Ch 33:2,6 36:12
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WHAT IS YOUR EXCUSE FOR DISOBEDIENCE?

Why then did you not obey ([shama](#); Lxx = [akouo](#)) the voice of the LORD - Samuel's questions assumed affirmations from Saul, which lead to the crucial "why then..." question!

but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"- Samuel gives Saul the facts of the matter, to help him answer the question. The question is in effect a declaration of Saul's guilt of pouncing on the plunder, instead of obliterating the plunder, an act that was evil in the LORD's sight. As someone has said, secret (hidden) sin on earth is open scandal in heaven. Samuel is saying Saul was guilty of open scandal in the court of the Almighty in Heaven! At this point there was an opportunity for Saul to confess and repent, but as we see he missed the opportunity!

"I Will Be Good"

Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? —1 Samuel 15:19

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-23

When Queen Victoria was a child, she didn't realize that she was in line for the throne of England. Her instructors, trying to prepare her for the future, were frustrated because they couldn't motivate her. She just didn't take her studies seriously. Finally, her teachers decided to tell her that one day she would become the queen of England. Upon hearing this, Victoria quietly said, "Then I will be good." The realization that she had inherited this high calling gave her a sense of responsibility that profoundly affected her conduct from that day forward.

Our Scripture reading for today tells how Saul had been chosen from among the people of Israel as their anointed king (1 Samuel 15:17). Almighty God had honored him greatly in giving him this position as leader of His special nation. But Saul didn't think about the kind of attitude that should accompany his high calling. If he had, he would not have pounced on the loot of battle as if he were the leader of an outlaw band (v.19).

As believers, we are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16-17). We have a noble calling. Let's always keep in mind who we are. This will help us to say, as young Victoria said, "I will be good." By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord, you see what's in my heart,
There's nothing hid from You;
So help me live the kind of life
That's honest, good, and true.
—D. De Haan

A child of the King will want to display the manners of the court.

1 Samuel 15:20 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:20 κα ε πεν Σαουλ πρ ς Σαμουηλ δι τ κο σα με τ ς φων ς το λαο κα πορε θην ν τ δ π στειλ ν με κ ριος κα γαγον τ ν Αγαγ βασιλ α Αμαληκ κα τ ν Αμαληκ ξωλ θρευσα

LXE 1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul said to Samuel, Because I listened to the voice of the people: yet I went the way by which the Lord sent me, and I brought Agag the king of Amalec, and I destroyed Amalec.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:20 Then Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the LORD! I went on the campaign the LORD sent me on. I brought back King Agag of the Amalekites after exterminating the Amalekites.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:20 "But I did obey the LORD!" Saul answered. "I went on the mission the LORD gave me: I brought back Agag, king of Amalek, and I completely destroyed the Amalekites.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:20 "But I did obey the LORD," Saul insisted. "I carried out the mission he gave me. I brought back King Agag, but I destroyed everyone else.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:20 Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:20 Saul replied to Samuel, 'But I did obey Yahweh's voice. I went on the mission which Yahweh gave me; I brought back Agag king of the Amalekites; I put Amalek under the curse of destruction;

NAB 1 Samuel 15:20 Saul answered Samuel: "I did indeed obey the LORD and fulfill the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought back Agag, and I have destroyed Amalek under the ban.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:20 And Saul saith unto Samuel, 'Because -- I have hearkened to the voice of Jehovah, and I go in the way which Jehovah hath sent me, and bring in Agag king of Amalek, and Amalek I have devoted;

- **I did obey:** 1Sa 15:13 Job 33:9 34:5 35:2 40:8 Mt 19:20 Lu 10:29 18:11 Ro 10:3
- **have brought:** 1Sa 15:3,8
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AMAZING ANSWERS! SAUL IS SO DECEIVED

Then - Marks progression in this dialogue, Saul now taking the defendant's stand so to speak.

Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey ([shama](#); Lxx = [akouo](#)) the voice of the LORD - If Saul truly believed that he had obeyed, then he was truly deceived. On the other hand, he could be trying to rationalize his sin. After all he has now been caught "[red handed](#)" and cannot deny the evidence against him.

and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me - In one sense he is correct. He was sent and he went. The problem of course was going on the mission is not the same as completing the mission, which he clearly did not accomplish!

and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek and have utterly destroyed ([charam](#)) the Amalekites. - What did Saul just say? This is an amazing admission that he brought back an Amalekite king and yet still has the nerve (or stupidity or self-deception) to say that he **utterly destroyed the Amalekites**. The evidence that he did not accomplish this was standing right before them!

Wiersbe comments that "Saul had substituted saying for doing (1Sa 15:13); excuses for confessions (1Sa 15:15,21); and sacrifice for obedience (1Sa 15:22). He was too quick to criticize and blame others; he was unwilling to face and judge his own sins. (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#)) ([Brian Bell](#) picks up on Wiersbe - Saul had a habit of substituting saying for doing; of making excuses instead of confessing sins; more concerned about looking good before the people than being good before God. God's orders were clear, but Saul's motives were mixed.)

Rod Mattoon - Saul will not admit he is wrong. He still claims he is obedient. Partial obedience, however, is not obedience at all! The pressure is on. Saul has been caught. The excuses continue to flow as Saul continues the blame game. He blubbers, "The people took the spoil.... they did it!" Beloved, revival comes in our life when we take responsibility for our actions and look at our sin the way God does. Saul was good at making excuses. Billy Sunday said, "Excuses are the skin of reason stuffed with lies." Saul has blamed Samuel, Jonathan, and now the people for his disobedience and problems. What do people blame today for their problems? The list usually includes parents, pastors, principles, teachers, bosses, the President, the church, the school, the environment, etc. Beloved, watch out for people who always make excuses for their problems. These folks refuse to be honest and accept responsibility for their actions. If you are not careful, you may be on the brunt end of their irresponsibility or you may be blamed one day for their problems. Solomon warned, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). Saul was guilty of doing this and he paid a price for it. The next swap that Saul makes in this passage is he replaces sacrifice for obedience. Saul claims the spoils are for a sacrifice to the Lord. God's response is He wants our obedience, not our sacrifices. When David sinned against God he said, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:16, 17). Saul's problem is he did not have a broken heart at all. His heart was filled with rebellion which God considered to be like witchcraft. The result of his rebellion was rejection from being king. God was stressing that sacrifice can never replace surrender. We can never know success as long as we live on substitutes in our life. What do people today sacrifice in their obedience to the Lord? Some folks may sacrifice time, money, or work at the church, but these sacrifices do not compensate disobedience in our own lives. God wants absolute surrender in our life. He wants us! ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)"

Brian Bell - Is there a king Agag in your life?

- Something God has prompted you to eradicate from your life that you haven't dealt with yet? (something you need to hack to pieces? Or, shake in the fire?)
- Someone that God has shown you isn't healthy for your relationship w/him?
- Some-thought that God continues to remind you to take captive & not allow it to run amok down the alleys of your mind?
- Is there a king Agag in your life?

1 Samuel 15:21 "But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:21 κα λαβεν λας τ ν σκ λων πο μνια κα βουκ λια τ πρ τα το ξελεθρε ματος θσαι ν πιον κυρ ου θεο μ ν ν Γαλαλοις

LXE 1 Samuel 15:21 But the people took of the spoils the best flocks and herds out of that which was destroyed, to sacrifice before the Lord our God in Galgal.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:21 But the army took from the plunder some of the sheep and cattle— the best of what was to be slaughtered— to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:21 The troops took sheep and cattle from the plunder-- the best of what was set apart for destruction-- to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:21 The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:21 But from the spoil the people took sheep and cattle, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:21 and from the booty the people have taken the best sheep and cattle of what was under the curse of destruction only to sacrifice them to Yahweh your God in Gilgal.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:21 But from the spoil the men took sheep and oxen, the best of what had been banned, to sacrifice to the LORD their God in Gilgal."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:21 and the people taketh of the spoil of the flock and herd, the first part of the devoted thing, for sacrifice to Jehovah thy God in Gilgal.'

- the people: 1Sa 15:15 Ge 3:13 Ex 32:22,23
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL "PASSES THE BUCK!"

To **pass the buck** is to attempt to shift the blame or the responsibility for something (especially something wrong) to another party. The corollary thought is that the person passing the buck is refusing to take responsibility for the miscue.

But - Term of contrast. Saul contrasts the peoples' disobedience with his fantasized "obedience" in the [previous passage](#).

The people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal - Saul is caught "[red handed](#)" (disobeyed God's clear command for total destruction), but he attempt a

"[sleight of hand](#)," trying to blame the people for committing evil in the sight of the LORD! On **your God** see [preceding note](#).

1 Samuel 15:22 Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much 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.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:22 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ ε θελητ ν τ κυρ λοκαυτ ματα κα θυσ αι ς τ κοσαι φων ς κυρ ου δο κο π ρ θυσαν γαθ κα πακρ ασις π ρ στ αρ κρι ν

LXE 1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Does the Lord take pleasure in whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in hearing the words of the Lord? behold, obedience is better than a good sacrifice, and hearkening than the fat of rams.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:22 Then Samuel said, "Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as he does in obedience? Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice; paying attention is better than the fat of rams.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:22 Then Samuel said: Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:22 And 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 listen than the fat of rams.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:22 But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:22 But Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the LORD: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Surely, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:22 To which, Samuel said: Is Yahweh pleased by burnt offerings and sacrifices or by obedience to Yahweh's voice? Truly, obedience is better than sacrifice, submissiveness than the fat of rams.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:22 But Samuel said: "Does the LORD so delight in holocausts and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the LORD? Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission than the fat of rams.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:22 And Samuel saith, 'Hath Jehovah had delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in hearkening to the voice of Jehovah? lo, hearkening than sacrifice is better; to give attention than fat of rams;

- **Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings** Ps 50:8-9 Ps 51:16,17 Pr 21:3 Isa 1:11-17 Jer 7:22-23 Ho 6:6 Am 5:21-24 Mic 6:6-8 Mt 9:13 12:7 23:23 Heb 10:4-10
- **obey:** Ex 19:5 Ec 5:1 Jer 7:23 11:4,7 26:13 Ho 6:6 Mt 5:24 Mk 12:33
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages: TAKE A MOMENT TO PRAYERFULLY, MEDITATIVELY READ THROUGH THESE PASSAGES...

Proverbs 21:3 To do righteousness and justice Is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.

Isaiah 1:11-17 "What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?" Says the LORD. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle; And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. 12 "When you come to appear before Me, Who requires of you this trampling of My courts? 13 "Bring your worthless offerings no longer, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. 14 "I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen.

Your hands are covered with blood. 16 "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

Jeremiah 7:22-23 "For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. 23 "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'

Amos 5:21-24 "**I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies** 22" Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. 23 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. 24 "**But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.**

Hosea 6:6 For **I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.**

WHICH IS THE BEST? SACRIFICE OR OBEDIENCE?

Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying([shama](#); Lxx = [akouo](#)) the voice of the LORD? - Samuel leads with a rhetorical question. He does not correct Saul's attempt to blame the people, but addresses his rationalization as to why they did it for Yahweh, to offer sacrifices to Him.

The Lord wants living obedience from the heart,
not dead animals on the altar.

-- Brian Bell

Behold ([hinneh](#); Lxx - [idou](#)) **to obey** ([shama](#); Lxx = akoe = act of hearing) **is better than sacrifice, and to heed** ([qashab](#); Lxx = epakroasis = hearkening, obedience - only use in Bible) **than the fat of rams** - Samuel does not wait for another (most likely) lame reply from Saul, but answers his question beginning with a **behold** to make sure Saul hears it! Then Samuel **"doubles down"** on the idea of obedience, using two Hebrew verbs, **obey** and **heed**. The upshot is that the answer to Samuel's rhetorical question is that obedience is the only '**sacrifice**' that truly pleases the LORD.

Remember that [shama](#) is a **key verb/word** in this chapter - 8x in 7v - 1Sa 15:1, 4, 14, 19, 20, 22, 24.

Bob Roe - Since in the Old Testament God himself ordained the sacrifice, why would Samuel say, **"to obey is better than sacrifice?"** What are you sacrificing when you obey God that you are not sacrificing when you sacrifice an animal? Self. I give up my rights to my actions, to my person, to my thought processes. Here are these goodly animals. They would make a great sacrifice. But, if I bring them into the nation of Israel, I am questioning God. However, if I don't bring them in, I am sacrificing me, my will, my rights, my thought processes.

Brian Bell - The Lord wants living obedience from the heart, not dead animals on the altar. Samuel wasn't belittling sacrifices, but pointing out that the **condition of the heart** determines the value of the sacrifice!!! He accepts the worship only if He can accept the worshipper! Sacrifice w/o obedience is only hypocrisy & empty religious ritual. The religious leaders in Jesus' day didn't understand this truth either. Neither does Churchianity today! We as believers today still face a constant temptation to substitute religious ritual for spiritual reality! What is ritual w/o obedience? What is outward religious observance that masks inner disobedience? Have God's requirements changed in our day? Nope!

One is reminded of the contrite, repentant words of David in Psalm 51:16-17-

'For **You do not delight in sacrifice**, otherwise I would give it; **You are not pleased with burnt offering**. The **sacrifices of God** are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

Micah asks

With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? 7 **Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil?** Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 **He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?** (Micah 6:6-8+)

Guzik - Religious observance without obedience is empty before God. The best sacrifice we can bring to God is a repentant heart (Psalm 51:16–17+) and our bodies surrendered to His service for obedience (Romans 12:1+). i. 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 these sacrifices mean little if there is not a surrendered heart to God, shown by simple obedience. ii. In sacrifice we offer the flesh of another creature; in obedience we offer our own will before God. Luther said, "I had rather be obedient, than able to work miracles." (Cited in Trapp)

MacArthur - The sacrificial system was never intended to function in place of living an obedient life, but was rather to be an expression of it (cf. Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21–27; Mic. 6:6–8). (Borrow [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Life Application Study Bible (borrow) - This is the first of numerous places in the Bible where the theme "obedience is better than sacrifice" is stated (Psalms 40:6-8; 51:16, 17; Proverbs 21:3; Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 12:7; Mark 12:33; Hebrews 10:8, 9). Was Samuel saying that sacrifice is unimportant? No, he was urging Saul to look at his reasons for making the sacrifice rather than at the sacrifice itself. A sacrifice was a ritual transaction between a person and God that physically demonstrated a relationship between them. But if the person's heart was not truly repentant or if he did not truly love God, the sacrifice was a hollow ritual. Religious ceremonies or rituals are empty unless they are performed with an attitude of love and obedience. "Being religious" (going to church, serving on a committee, giving to charity) is not enough if we do not act out of devotion and obedience to God.

Obey (hear, listen, understand)([08085](#)) **shama** means to hear (Adam and Eve hearing God = Ge 3:8, 10, Ge 18:10 = "overheard"), to listen (Ge 3:17, Ge 16:2 [= this was a big mistake and was the origin of Jews and Arabs!] Ex 6:9,16:20, 18:19, Webster's 1828 on "listen" = to hearken; to give ear; to attend closely with a view to hear. To obey; to yield to advice; to follow admonition) and since hearing/listening are often closely linked to obedience, shama is translated obey (1 Sa 15:22, Ge 22:18, 26:5, 39:10, Ex 19:5, disobedience = Lev 26:14, 18, 21, 27) or to understand. KJV translates shama "hearken" (196x) a word which means to give respectful attention. Of God's hearing in general or hearing our prayers (Hab 1:2, Ps 66:18, click here for more in the Psalms, cf God's hearing in Zeph 2:8, Ge 16:11, 17:20, 30:17, 22, Ge 21:17, 29:33, 30:6, 17, 22; Ex 2:24, Ex 16:8, 9, 12, Nu 11:1, 12:2). Shama means "to hear intelligently and attentively and respond appropriately." In other words to hear does not convey the idea of "in one ear and out the other!"

Heed (give attention) ([07181](#)) **qashab** means to incline (ears) to listen carefully, to pay (close) attention, to give heed, to obey. The root denotes the activity of hearing, emphasizing either paying close attention or obeying (heeding).

Qashab - 45v - gave attention(1), give attention(3), give heed(9), give...heed(1), given heed(2), heed(2), incline(1), listen(10), listened(2), listening(1), listens(1), make your attentive(1), paid attention(3), paid...attention(1), pay attention(6), pay...attention(1), pays attention(1). 1 Sam. 15:22; 2 Chr. 20:15; 2 Chr. 33:10; Neh. 9:34; Job 13:6; Job 33:31; Ps. 5:2; Ps. 10:17; Ps. 17:1; Ps. 55:2; Ps. 61:1; Ps. 66:19; Ps. 86:6; Ps. 142:6; Prov. 1:24; Prov. 2:2; Prov. 4:1; Prov. 4:20; Prov. 5:1; Prov. 7:24; Prov. 17:4; Prov. 29:12; Cant. 8:13; Isa. 10:30; Isa. 21:7; Isa. 28:23; Isa. 32:3; Isa. 34:1; Isa. 42:23; Isa. 48:18; Isa. 49:1; Isa. 51:4; Jer. 6:10; Jer. 6:17; Jer. 6:19; Jer. 8:6; Jer. 18:18; Jer. 18:19; Jer. 23:18; Dan. 9:19; Hos. 5:1; Mic. 1:2; Zech. 1:4; Zech. 7:11; Mal. 3:16

C H Spurgeon - "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." —1 Samuel 15:22

Saul had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion. The sentence before us is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present idolatrous generation, who are very fond of the fineries of will-worship, but utterly neglect the laws of God. Be it ever in your remembrance, that to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour's command is better than any outward form of religion; and to hearken to his precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or any other precious thing to lay upon his altar. If you are failing to keep the least of Christ's commands to his disciples, I pray you be disobedient no longer. All the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the devout actions which you may perform, are no recompense for disobedience. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," however pompous. Talk not of Gregorian chants, sumptuous robes, incense, and banners; the first thing which God requires of his child is obedience; and though you should give your body to be burned, and all your goods to feed the poor, yet if you do not hearken to the Lord's precepts, all your formalities shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, but it is a much more blessed thing when one has been taught the lesson, to carry it out to the letter. How many adorn their temples and decorate their priests, but refuse to obey the word of the Lord! My soul, come not thou into their secret.

[An Obedient Heart](#)

Samuel replied, "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams."¹
Samuel 15:22

As the Lord had directed, Saul and the Israelite army attacked and defeated the Amalekites. But instead of killing every person and animal as God had commanded, Saul brought back Agag, the Amalekite king, and the best of their sheep and cattle. Then while Saul was trying to justify his disobedience, Samuel replied with the words in verse 22, truth that is just as important for us today as it was for people in the Old Testament: obeying the voice of the Lord, listening to him, and following his marching orders instead of our own are of far more value to God than the most expensive or grand sacrifice we could offer. When God tells us to go or to call that person or to do this humble task, then as the Nike commercial says, Just do it! Do it God's way. Don't lean on your own understanding or perception of the situation. Don't wait to see the whole blueprint or figure everything out. Follow the light at your feet, and as you are faithful in the small things God asks of you, He will do the great thing.

LORD, work in me a heart of obedience so I can live a life that pleases you. It is so easy to try to rationalize disobedience or attempt to chart my own course. But you are holy and righteous, and you value my obedience above anything else I could ever give you. May my daily sacrifice to you be a humble and obedient heart that delights in your smile.

THERE MUST BE NO DEBATE. THE MOMENT YOU OBEY THE LIGHT, THE SON OF GOD PRESSES THROUGH YOU IN THAT PARTICULAR; BUT IF YOU DEBATE YOU GRIEVE THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Oswald Chambers

[David Jeremiah](#) - Author and pastor Ben Patterson was mountain climbing with three friends when he took an ill-advised short-cut and got separated from the others and found himself trapped on an icy ledge. When his friends finally found him, they talked him off the ledge, telling him where to put his feet (which he couldn't see) as he inched off the ledge. Only by obeying the instructions of his more-experienced friends was he saved from certain death.

There is value in obedience. Often we think we have a better idea or plan than God. But once we execute our plan we lose the opportunity of seeing how beneficial God's plan would have been. Saul, the first king of Israel, learned the hard way that God delights in obedience more than anything else. When Saul substituted his plan for God's, it cost him the throne of Israel (1 Samuel 15).

One of the greatest challenges of the Christian life is to learn that God says what He says for a reason. Better to take Him at His word.

Beware of reasoning about God's Word—obey it!
-- Oswald Chambers

[Oswald Chambers](#) - The counterfeit of obedience is a state of mind in which you create your own opportunities to sacrifice yourself, and your zeal and enthusiasm are mistaken for discernment. It is easier to sacrifice yourself than to fulfill your spiritual destiny, which is stated in Romans 12:1-2. It is much better to fulfill the purpose of God in your life by discerning His will than it is to perform great acts of self-sacrifice. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..." (1 Samuel 15:22). Beware of paying attention or going back to what you once were, when God wants you to be something that you have never been. "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know..." (John 7:17).

D L Moody Handbook - DID you ever notice all but the heart of man obeys God? If you look through history, you will find that this is true. In the beginning God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. "Let the waters bring forth," and the water brought forth abundantly. And one of the proofs that Jesus Christ is God is that He spoke to nature, and nature obeyed Him. At one time He spoke to the sea, and the sea recognized and obeyed. He spoke to the fig-tree, and instantly it withered and died, it obeyed literally and at once. He spoke to devils, and the devils fled. He spoke to the grave, and the grave obeyed Him and gave back its dead. But when He speaks to man, man will not obey Him. That is why man is out of harmony with God, and it will never be different until men learn to obey God. God wants obedience, and He will have it, else there can be no harmony.

TRUST AND OBEY ([play hymn](#)) **John H. Sammis, 1846–1919** - [Borrow Amazing Grace - 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotionals](#)

But Samuel replied, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22)

Life can often be a restless, disrupted existence until we give ourselves wholeheartedly to something beyond ourselves and follow and obey it supremely. Such implicit trust in God's great love and wisdom with a sincere desire to follow His leading should be every Christian's goal. Our willingness to trust and obey is always the first step toward God's blessing in our lives.

In 1886 Daniel B. Towner, director of the music department at Moody Bible Institute, was leading the music for evangelist D. L. Moody's series of meetings in Brockton, Massachusetts. A young man rose to give a testimony, saying, "I am not quite sure—but I am going to trust, and I am going to obey." Mr. Towner jotted down this statement and sent it to the Rev. J. H. Sammis, a Presbyterian minister and later a teacher at Moody, who wrote the present five stanzas.

Salvation is God's responsibility. Our responsibility is to trust in that salvation and then to obey its truths. "Trust and Obey" presents a balanced view of a believer's trust in Christ's redemptive work, and it speaks of the resulting desire to obey Him and do His will in our daily lives. Then, and only then, do we experience real peace and joy.

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way! While we do His good will He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, but His smile quickly drives it away; not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear, can abide while we trust and obey.

Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our toil He doth richly repay; not a grief nor a loss, not a frown nor a cross, but is blest if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay, for the favor He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, or we'll walk by His side in the way; what He says we will do, where He sends we will go—Never fear, only trust and obey.

Chorus: Trust and obey—for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus—but to trust and obey.

For Today: Psalm 37:3–5; John 8:31; John 14:23; James 2:14–26; 1 John 2:6

Experience the glory and abiding presence of Christ as you determine to trust Him more completely and obey His leading more fully in all that you do. Carry this musical reminder with you remembering—

C H Spurgeon - SAUL had been commanded to slay utterly all the Amalekites and their cattle. Instead of doing so, he preserved the king, and suffered his people to take the best of the oxen and of the sheep. When called to account for this, he declared that he did it with a view of offering sacrifice to God; but Samuel met him at once with the assurance that such sacrifices were no excuse for an act of direct rebellion, and in so doing he altered his sentence, which is worthy to be printed in letters of gold, and to be hung up before the eyes of the present generation: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." I think that in this verse—and here I shall dwell mainly—there is first a voice to professing Christians, and then, secondly, to unconverted persons.

I. First, I will speak to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, and who have made a PROFESSION of your faith in him.

Be it ever in your remembrance, that to obey, to keep strictly in the path of your Saviour's command, is better than any outward form of religion, and to hearken to his precept with an attentive ear is better than to bring the fat of rams, or anything else which you may wish to lay upon his altar.

Probably, there are some of you here to-night who may be living in the neglect of some known duty. It is no new thing for Christians to know their duty, to have their conscience enlightened about it, and yet to neglect it. If you are failing to keep the least of one of Christ's commands to his disciples, I pray you, brethren, be disobedient no longer. I know, for instance, that some of you can see it to be your duty, as believers, to be baptized. If you did not think it to be your duty, I would not bring this text to bear upon you; but if you feel it to be right, and you do it not, let me say to you that all the pretensions you make of attachment to your Master, and all the other actions which you may perform, are as nothing compared with the neglect of this. "To obey," even in the slightest and smallest thing, "is better than sacrifice," and to hearken diligently to the Lord's commands is better than the fat of rams. It may be that some of you, though you are professed Christians, are living in the prosecution of some evil trade, and your conscience has often said, "Get out of it." You are not in the position that a Christian ought to be in; but then you hope that you will be able to make a little money, and you will retire and do a world of good with it. Ah! God cares nothing for this rams' fat of yours; he asks not for these sacrifices which you intend to make. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Perhaps you are in connection with a Christian church in which you may see much that is wrong, and you know that you ought not to tolerate it, but still you do so. You say, "I have a position of usefulness, and if I come out I shall not be so useful as I am now." My brother, your usefulness is but as the fat of rams, and "to obey is better than" it all. The right way for a Christian to walk in is to do what his Master bids him, leaving all consequences to the Almighty. You have nothing to do with your own usefulness further than to keep your Master's commands, at all hazards and under all risks. "I counsel thee to keep the King's commandments," and "whatsoever he saith

unto thee, do it." Sit at his feet with Mary, and learn of him, and when thou risest up from that reverent posture, let it be with the prayer—

"Help me to run in thy commands,
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,
Offend against my God."

Possibly, too, dear brother, there may be some evil habit in which you are indulging, and which you excuse by the reflection, "Well, I am always at the prayer meeting; I am constantly at communion, and I give so much of my substance to the support of the Lord's work." I am glad that you do these things; but oh! I pray you give up that sin! I pray you cut it to pieces and cast it away, for if you do not, all your show of sacrifice will be but an abomination. The first thing which God requires of you as his beloved is obedience; and though you should preach with the tongue of men and of angels, though you should give your body to be burned, and your goods to feed the poor, yet, if you do not hearken to your Lord, and are not obedient to his will, all besides shall profit you nothing. It is a blessed thing to be teachable as a little child, and to be willing to be taught of God; but it is a much more blessed thing still, when one has been taught to go at once and carry out the lesson which the Master has whispered in the ear. How many excellent Christians there are who sacrifice a goodly flock of sheep so as to replenish the altar of our God, who nevertheless are faulty because they obey not the word of the Lord. Look at our Missionary Society's list of subscribers, and ask yourself the question, Do all these help the spread of the gospel by obedience to the precept, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"? There you see in the money gift the sacrifice, but better far to have obedience. Both ought to be joined together; but of the two, better is the act of obedience than of giving. Noah's sacrifice sent up a sweet savour before God, but in God's sight the obedience which led him to build the ark and enter in with his family was far more precious; and for this his name is written amongst the champions of faith, and handed down to us as a word of honour and renown.

Moreover, brethren, to obey is better than sacrifice in the matter of caring for the sick and needy of all classes. We rejoice in the number of hospitals which adorn our cities. These are the princely trophies of the power of our holy religion. To these we triumphantly point as amongst the ripe fruits of that Christianity which is for the healing of the nations, chiefly in a spiritual, but also in the physical aspect of man's diseased and woe-begone state. There are no nobler words in our language than those inscribed on so many walls—"Supported by voluntary contributions." We glory in them. Rome's monuments, Grecian trophies. Egyptia's mighty tombs, and Assyria's huge monoliths, are dwarfed into petty exhibitions of human pride and vanity before the sublime majesty of these exhibitions of a God-given love to our fellow men; but all these homes of mercy and healing become evils to ourselves though they are blessings to the distressed, if we contribute of our wealth to their exchequer and neglect personally to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, and do not, like the Master, go about doing good. Give as God has given to you; but remember God acts as well as gives. "Go thou and do likewise." Sacrifice, but also obey. A cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple, and in obedience to the Lord, is a golden deed, valued by our heavenly Master above all price, more precious in his sight than silver, yea, than much fine gold. May I put this very earnestly to the members of this church, and, indeed, to all of you who hope that you are followers of Christ? Is there anything that you are neglecting? Is there any sin in which you are indulging? Is there any voice of conscience to which you have turned a deaf ear? Is there one passage of Scripture which you dare not look in the face, because you are living in neglect of it? Then let Samuel's voice come to you, and set you seeking for more grace; for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (Full sermon [Obedience Better than Sacrifice](#))

QUESTION - [Why is obedience better than sacrifice?](#)

ANSWER - In 1 Samuel 15, Saul chose to keep the Amalekite king [Agag](#) alive and took the plunder from the battle rather than destroy everything as God had commanded. When Samuel confronted him, Saul said, "I did obey the Lord. . . . I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal" (1 Samuel 15:20–21).

Samuel answered in 1 Samuel 15:22, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices / as much as in obeying the Lord? / To obey is better than sacrifice." Why is obedience better than sacrifice?

Two answers are given. The first answer is offered in Samuel's response: "For rebellion is like the sin of divination, / and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. / Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, / he has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:23). Saul's disobedience was an act of rebellion, [iniquity](#) (sin), and idolatry.

The second answer is offered in Saul's confession. He said, "I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them" (1 Samuel 15:24). Saul admitted that his sacrifice was a transgression (sin) and was

against God's command. It was the result of seeking the approval of people.

Putting it all together, we see several reasons why obedience to God is better than making sacrifices or offerings to Him: 1) disobedience is an act of rebellion, 2) disobedience is sinful, 3) disobedience is a form of idolatry, 4) disobedience disrespects God's Word, and 5) disobedience is based on looking good to other people rather than to God.

Still today, in our human attempts to look good in serving God, there is the temptation to perform certain religious duties rather than to truly obey God. Even good activities, such as giving money to charity, attending church services, or praying in public, are not as important to God as obeying His commands.

Jesus criticized the teachers of His time for similar practices. Matthew 6 notes three religious activities—fasting, public prayer, and giving to those in need—that people often use to look good in front of other people rather than to honor God. As in 1 Samuel 15, the problem is not the offerings but the disobedience of God's commands and the desire for approval of people rather than the approval of God. GotQuestions.org

Complete Obedience

To obey is better than sacrifice. — 1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-29

God said David was a "man after My own heart" (Acts 13:22). Saul, on the other hand, was a man after his own heart. He insisted on doing things his way rather than God's way.

In 1 Samuel 15, the Lord instructed Saul, "Go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them" (v.3). As the instrument of God's judgment, Saul was not to let anyone or anything escape.

Did Saul obey God? No! He spared the king's life and kept the best animals and "all that was good" (v.9). When confronted by Samuel, Saul lied, made excuses, and insisted that he had obeyed the Lord (vv.20-21). He was guilty of doing what he wanted and expecting God to approve of his incomplete obedience.

We too sometimes choose not to obey the Lord completely. Then we try to justify our own sinful behavior by telling ourselves that it doesn't really matter to God, or that other Christians are far more sinful than we are. But God demands total obedience.

The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to reveal to us what the Lord wants us to do. Let's stop making excuses and honor Him with our complete obedience. By: David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O help us, Lord, to heed Your Word,
Its precepts to obey;
And give us strength to quench the urge
To do things our own way.
—Sper

Obedience neither procrastinates nor questions.

Obedience Is Worship

To obey is better than sacrifice. — 1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:13-23

While I was traveling with a chorale from a Christian high school, it was great to see the students praise God as they led in worship in the churches we visited. What happened away from church was even better to see. One day the group discovered that a woman had no money for gas—and they spontaneously felt led by God to take up a collection. They were able to give her enough money for several tankfuls of gas.

It's one thing to worship and praise God at church; it's quite another to move out into the real world and worship Him through daily obedience.

The students' example causes us to think about our own lives. Do we confine our worship to church? Or do we continue to worship Him by obeying Him in our daily life, looking for opportunities to serve?

In 1 Samuel 15 we see that Saul was asked by the Lord to do a task; but when we review what he did (vv.20-21), we discover that he used worship (sacrifice) as an excuse for his failure to obey God. God's response was, "To obey is better than sacrifice" (v.22).

It's good to be involved in worship at church. But let's also ask God to show us ways to continue to give Him the praise He deserves through our obedience. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I want my worship of You to extend beyond the walls of my church. Help me to listen to Your prompting and to serve others wherever I can—no matter what day it is.

Our worship should not be confined to times and places; it should be the spirit of our lives.

Terms Of Obedience

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. —1 Samuel 15:22

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1-23

A tongue-in-cheek list of medical terms making the rounds includes the following definitions:

Artery: the study of paintings
Vein: conceited
Varicose: nearby
Dilate: to live long
Bacteria: back door of a cafeteria
Node: was aware of

The person who wrote that humorous list used the same vocabulary as a physician but certainly not the same dictionary!

In my daily walk with God, I'm becoming painfully aware of how often I use my own definitions instead of His. For instance, is my understanding of obedience the same as His? Do I carry out God's commands as given, or do I modify His Word to suit my preferences?

King Saul blatantly disobeyed God's instructions, then told Samuel the priest, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam. 15:13). When Samuel challenged him, Saul declared his innocence (v.20). God saw it differently and removed Saul from the throne of Israel because of his willful disobedience (v.23).

When I identify myself as a citizen of God's kingdom, I must follow His definitions without tailoring them to suit my own ideas. That's obedience. —DCM By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let your days be Mine to order;
Where I lead, obedient be.
Let your own desires be nothing;
Only seek to follow Me.
—Anon.

True obedience is on God's terms, not ours.

[Walter Kaiser - Hard Sayings of the Bible - scroll to page 180-](#) 1Sa 15:22 Does the Lord Delight in Sacrifices?

Though some texts call for burnt offerings or daily offerings to God (for example, Ex 29:18, 36; Lev 1–7), others appear to disparage any sacrifices, just as 1 Samuel 15:22 seems to do. How do we reconcile this seeming contradiction?

God derives very little satisfaction from the external act of sacrificing. In fact, he complains, "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens. ... If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it" (Ps 50:9, 12).

Indeed, David learned this same lesson the hard way. After his sin with Bathsheba and the rebuke of Nathan the prophet, David confessed, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:17). After the priority of the heart attitude had been corrected, it was possible for David to say, "Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar" (Ps 51:19).

Samuel's harangue seconds the message of the writing prophets: Perfunctory acts of worship and ritual, apart from diligent obedience, were basically worthless both to God and to the individual.

This is why the prophet Isaiah rebuked his nation for their empty ritualism. What good, he lamented, were all the sacrifices, New Moon festivals, sabbaths, convocations and filing into the temple of God? So worthless was all this feverish activity that God said he was fed up with it all (Is 1:11–15). What was needed, instead, was a whole new heart attitude as the proper preparation for meeting God. Warned Isaiah, "'Wash and make yourselves clean. ... Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool'" (Is 1:16, 18). Then real sacrifices could be offered to God.

Jeremiah records the same complaint: "Your burnt offerings are not acceptable; your sacrifices do not please me" (Jer 6:20). So deceptive was the nation's trust in this hollow worship that Jeremiah later announced that God had wanted more than sacrifices when he brought Israel out of Egypt (Jer 7:22). He had wanted the people to trust him. It was always tempting to substitute attendance at God's house, heartless worship or possessing God's Word for active response to that Word (Jer 7:9–15, 21–26; 8:8–12).

No less definitive were the messages of Hosea (Hos 6:6) and Micah (Mic 6:6–8). The temptation to externalize religion and to use it only in emergency situations was altogether too familiar.

Samuel's rebuke belongs to the same class of complaints. It was couched in poetry, as some of those listed above were, and it also had a proverbial form. The moral truth it conveys must be understood comparatively. Often a proverb was stated in terms that call for setting priorities. Accordingly one must read an implied "this first and then that." These "better" wisdom sayings, of course, directly point to such a priority. What does not follow is that what is denied, or not called "better," is thereby rejected by God. Arguing on those grounds would ignore the statement's proverbial structure.

God does approve of sacrificing, but he does not wish to have it at the expense of full obedience to his Word or as a substitute for a personal relationship of love and trust. Sacrifices, however, were under the Old Testament economy. Animal sacrifices are no longer necessary today, because Christ was our sacrifice, once for all (Heb 10:1–18). Nevertheless, the principle remains the same: What is the use of performing outward acts of religion if that religious activity is not grounded in an obedient heart of faith? True religious affection for God begins with the heart and not in acts of worship or the accompanying vestments and ritual!

[Walter Kaiser - Hard Sayings of the Bible - scroll to page 245](#) - Ps 51:16–17, 19. Does God Desire Sacrifices?

It is startling to read in Psalm 51 that God does not wish worshipers to bring any sacrifices. When one considers the extensive instructions to the contrary in the book of Leviticus, what could the psalmist have had in mind except what appears to be a flat-out contradiction? Hadn't God issued a command that sacrifices were to be brought to his house?

This text is not alone in posing this problem. A number of other texts appear to teach the same disavowal of sacrifices and other ritual acts, such as fasting. Some of them are 1 Samuel 15:14–22, Jeremiah 7:21–23, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6–8 and Zechariah 7:4–7. In each of these texts God appears to be spurning the external acts and rituals of worship, usually as expressed in sacrifices. But we will be mistaken if we assume that this is an absolute rejection of the acts of worship he had previously required under the Mosaic covenant.

Some have sought to relieve the tension produced by texts such as this one by saying that the instructions for the sacrifices came later; they were not, as a first reading of the text would suggest and as most conservative scholars have assumed, from the hand of Moses. However, this solution is too high a price to pay for a quick harmonization of the data. If the law had come later (in the fifth century B.C.), surely the writers, or even their editors and redactors (if such were involved), would not have been careless enough to ignore the fact that they had created a problem in the text. There must have been some other solution that was apparent to and understood by those earlier audiences.

Such a solution is to be found in the Old Testament writers' constant pleading for the worshiper's heart attitude to be set right. That is the precise point of these verses from Psalm 51 as well. What was the use of piling on sacrifices if they were not expressions of a spirit of contrition and genuine piety of life? God always inspects the giver, even in the Old Testament, before he inspects the gift, offering or praise. How can one who is unclean offer a clean sacrifice?

Psalm 51:16's statement of denial is qualified by what follows in verse 17. The sacrifices of a broken and contrite spirit are the gifts God seeks as a prelude to any sacrifices of sheep, goats or bulls. One whose heart is repentant is never despised by God. Consequently, the sacrifices from such a one are prized, as Psalm 51:19 says, "Then you will be pleased with the sacrifices of the righteous and whole burnt offerings, then they will offer on your altar bulls" (my literal translation).

The difficulty of these verses is not to be solved in the manner once fashionable (by dating the law to the fifth or fourth century B.C.), but by noticing the constant urging of God's servants that the people give their hearts and their lives in deep contrition and brokenness of spirit before they observe feasts, fasts, sabbaths or sacrifices.

Isaiah, for example, demanded that the people stop their sacrifices, convocations, appointed feast days and prayers (Is 1:11–15); instead, he said, they must begin by coming before God with clean hands and a clean heart. If only the Israelites would first come and reason with the Lord, even if their sins were as red as crimson, they could be as white as wool; they had only to be obedient and willing (Is 1:16–18). Then God could accept their sacrifices, just as he accepted David's sacrifices for his sin with Bathsheba after David repented. Rote religion can never substitute for purity of heart.

See also comments

- GENESIS 4:3–4;
- 1 SAMUEL 15:22;
- ECCLESIASTES 7:16–18.

1 Samuel 15:23 "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:23 τι μαρτ α ο νισμ στιν δ νην κα π νους θεραφιν π γουσιν τι ξουδ νωσας τ μα κυρ ου κα ξουδεν σει σε κ ριος μ ε ναι βασιλ α π Ισραηλ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:23 For sin is as divination; idols bring on pain and grief. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord also shall reject thee from being king over Israel.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and presumption is like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and defiance is like wickedness and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has rejected you as king.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:23 Rebellion is as sinful as witchcraft, and stubbornness as bad as worshiping idols. So because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:23 For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:23 Rebellion is a sin of sorcery, presumption a crime of idolatry! 'Since you have rejected Yahweh's word, he has rejected you as king.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:23 For a sin like divination is rebellion, and presumption is the crime of idolatry. Because you have rejected the command of the LORD, he, too, has rejected you as ruler."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:23 for a sin of divination is rebellion, and iniquity and teraphim is stubbornness; because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, He also doth reject thee from being king.'

- **rebellion:** 1Sa 12:14,15 Nu 14:9 De 9:7,24 Jos 22:16-19 Job 34:37 Ps 107:11 Jer 28:16 29:32 Eze 2:5-8
- **divination,** Ex 22:18 Lev 20:6,27 De 18:10,11 Isa 8:19 19:3 Rev 22:15
- **insubordination:** 2Co 6:16 Ga 5:20 Rev 21:8
- **rejected:** 1Sa 2:30 13:14 16:1 2Ki 17:15-20 1Ch 28:9
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAUL'S REBELLION EQUATED

WITH DIVINATION & IDOLATRY!

For - Term of explanation. What is Samuel explaining?

Rebellion ([meri](#); Lxx = [hamartia](#) = sin) is as the sin ([chattat/chattath](#)) of **divination**, And **insubordination** ([patsar](#)) is as iniquity and idolatry - Samuel is clearly stating Saul was guilty of **rebellion** and **insubordination**. The sin of **divination** called for execution (Ex 22:18, Lv 20:6, Dt 18:10, Mic 5:10-14)! **Insubordination** is the act of willfully disobeying a lawful order of one's superior. It is defiance of authority or refusal to obey orders. God equates **insubordination** it with idol worship (also worthy of death - cf Dt 13:12-15) because in essence this person does not obey God but another god, especially the "god" of self (cf "set up a monument" to SELF - 1Sa 15:12+). Frankly, the fact that Saul was allowed to live (having committed sins worthy of capital punishment) and finish out his reign is a reflection of God's longsuffering and mercy.

Keil and Delitzsch correctly point out that "All conscious disobedience is actually idolatry, because it makes self-will, the human I, into a god."

NKJV SB - Saul's stubborn disobedience was essentially an act of idolatry because it elevated his will above God's will.

Life Application Study Bible ([borrow](#)) - **Rebellion** against God is perhaps the most serious sin of all because as long as a person rebels, he or she closes the door to forgiveness and restoration with God.

Young: "Rebellion . . . witchcraft. Both are forms of apostasy, the one being denial of God's authority, the other a recognition of supernatural powers distinct from God."

Brian Bell - Samuel went on to reveal to Saul his sins of rebellion & stubbornness (arrogance) controlled his heart & they were as evil as witchcraft (which he'd resort to later) & idolatry. 1. Both sins were evidences of a heart that had rejected the Word of the Lord. 2. To know God's will & deliberately disobey it is to put ourselves above God, & therefore become our own god. This is the vilest form of idolatry!

Guzik - A rebellious, stubborn heart rejects God just as certainly as someone rejects God by occult practices or idolatry. It would be easy for Saul to point his finger at the Amalekites or the Philistines and say, "Look at those Godless idolaters. They don't worship the true God like I do." But Saul didn't worship the true God either because the real worship of God begins with surrender.

Because - Term of explanation. This seems to be a double explanation. On one hand, Samuel is explaining why Saul is guilty of **rebellion** and **insubordination**. On the other hand, this **because** introduces the clause that explains why God rejected Saul. The latter is probably the primary meaning in this context.

You have rejected ([ma'as](#); Lxx = [exoutheneo](#) = despised, treated with contempt) **the Word of the LORD, He has also rejected** ([ma'as](#); Lxx = [exoutheneo](#) = despised, treated with contempt) **you from being king** - To reject God's word is tantamount to rejecting God (cf Jesus = the Word - Jn 1:1+). **You have rejected** ([ma'as](#)) is translated in the Lxx with a strong verb ([exoutheneo](#)) which means to despise, disdain, consider of no account, treat with contempt, all of these nuances presenting a horrible picture of Saul's response to **the Word of the LORD**. In addition the Greek verb ([exoutheneo](#)) is in the active voice indicating that Saul made a volitional choice, a choice of his will to voluntarily reject God's Word! Incredible! Given statements like this, one has to question whether Saul was truly saved and headed for Heaven?

Mark it down - if a person continually rejects God, God will forever reject that person!

Guzik points out that "it would be almost 25 years before there was another king enthroned in Israel. Saul's rejection was final, but it was not immediate. God used almost 25 years to train up the right replacement for Saul."

Bob Roe suggests an interesting application of this verse - In verse 23 we have seen God reject Saul as king of Israel and yet Saul actually reigns for some time to come. We are going to see Saul used as a training tool for David. God chooses David and Samuel anoints him in the very next chapter, but Saul still reigns. In our lives why does God leave the flesh? God can do anything, so, why doesn't he remove the flesh from our lives and leave just Jesus Christ, the Holy One of God, as our new nature with no "Old Man" hanging around? **We learn through struggle. We learn faith and obedience.** God is going to teach that to David, and we are going to see a man after God's own heart as he learns it.

Rebellion ([04805](#)) [meri](#) obstinacy, stubbornness, rebelliousness. "The term consistently stays within this tight semantic range and most often describes the Israelites' determined refusal to obey the precepts laid down by the Lord in His Law or Torah. This characteristic attitude was a visible manifestation of their hard hearts. Moses had the Book of the Law placed beside the ark of the covenant to remain there as a witness against the Israelites' rebelliousness after he died (Deut. 31:27; Nu 17:10). The Lord rejected Saul as king over Israel because of his rebellion against the command the Lord had earlier given him (1 Sam. 15:23). Continually in

Ezekiel, the Lord refers to Israel as the "house of rebelliousness" (= rebellious people; Ezek. 2:5-8; 3:9, 26, 27; 12:2, 3, 9)." (Baker - CWD)

Divination (07081) **qesem** is a masculine noun meaning divination. This word described the cultic practice of foreign nations that was prohibited in Israel (Deut. 18:10); and considered a great sin (1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Kgs. 17:17). False prophets used divination to prophesy in God's name, but God identified them as false (Jer. 14:14; Ezek. 13:6); and pledged to remove such practices from Israel (Ezek. 13:23). Several verses give some insight into what this actual practice looked like: it was compared to a kingly sentence (Prov. 16:10); and was used to discern between two choices (Ezek. 21:21[26], 22[27]). ([Word Study OT](#))

Insubordination (06484) (**patsar**) means to push, to press, to peck at. It can describe a literal pushing (Ge 19:9). Figuratively it means to urge someone to do something (Ge 33:11, Jdg 19:7). Negatively it means to rebel against someone - defiance to authority, refusal to obey orders (it is like "spiritual mutiny").

Gilbrant - **Pätsar** occurs in relation to one person or group urging on another to a particular action. For example, Lot urged the two angels to stay with him instead of spending the night in downtown Sodom (Gen. 19:3); the homosexual men of Sodom then urged Lot to bring out his guests so they could have sexual relations with them (v. 9); Jacob urged Esau to accept his gift and make peace between them (33:11); the company of prophets persisted in urging Elisha to search for Elijah, who had been taken away (2 Ki. 2:17). Finally, Elisha rejected Naaman's gift of money after he was healed of leprosy (2Ki 5:16). Brown-Driver-Briggs maintains that the only instance of **pätsar** in the Hiphil stem, found in 1 Sam. 15:23, gives the sense of arrogance and presumption, or literally, "**to display pushing.**" The context of this passage is that because Saul rejected the commands of the Lord, the Lord, in turn, would reject Saul as king. Samuel stated that the offerings and sacrifices of Saul were in vain, because his heart was full of rebellion and arrogance (vv. 22f). ([Complete Biblical Library](#))

Patsar - 7v - insubordination(1), pressed(1), urged(5). Gen. 19:3; Gen. 19:9; Gen. 33:11; Jdg. 19:7; 1 Sam. 15:23; 2 Ki. 2:17; 2 Ki. 5:16

Rejected (cast off, despised) (03988) **ma'as** means to reject, to despise, to abhor, to refuse. The primary idea is to treat as loathsome (that which is repulsive, detestable, causing disgust). **Ma'as** is used of men rejecting God's law, ordinances or statutes (2Ki 17:15, Lev 26:15, 43, Isa 5:24, Ezek 5:6, 20:13, 16, 24, Amos 2:4. Saul **rejected** God's word - 1Sa 15:26. Isa 30:12, cp Hos 4:6), of rejecting Him (Nu 11:20 = **Lxx** = **apeitheo** - disobeyed, 1Sa 10:19), the promised land by the first generation (Nu 14:31, cp Ps 106:23). God told Samuel "they have not **rejected** you, but they have **rejected** Me from being king over them." (1Sa 8:7) 2Ki 17:20 says Jehovah "**rejected** all the descendants of Israel." (cp Hos 9:17) Used of Jehovah saying He would "cast off Jerusalem." (2Ki 23:27 contrast Jer 31:38-40) We are not to "**despise** the discipline of the Almighty." (Job 5:17, Pr 3:11, 15:32) After Job sees God, he says "therefore I **retract** and I repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6) Used of a reprobate (Ps 15:4). In a clear Messianic prophecy Psalms 118:22 = "The stone which the builders **rejected** (**apodokimazo** - regard as unworthy after testing) Has become the chief corner stone." Evil should be refused or rejected (Isa 7:15, 16).

Ma'as - 67v - abhorred(1), cast them away(1), cast away(1), cast off(2), completely rejected(1), despise(6), despised(4), despises(2), despising(1), disdained(1), refuse(2), reject(8), rejected(37), rejects(1), reprobate(1), retract(1), utterly rejected(1), waste away(1). Lev. 26:15; Lev. 26:43; Lev. 26:44; Num. 11:20; Num. 14:31; Jdg. 9:38; 1 Sam. 8:7; 1 Sam. 10:19; 1 Sam. 15:23; 1 Sam. 15:26; 1 Sam. 16:1; 1 Sam. 16:7; 2 Ki. 17:15; 2 Ki. 17:20; 2 Ki. 23:27; Job 5:17; Job 7:16; Job 8:20; Job 9:21; Job 10:3; Job 19:18; Job 30:1; Job 31:13; Job 34:33; Job 36:5; Job 42:6; Ps. 15:4; Ps. 36:4; Ps. 53:5; Ps. 78:59; Ps. 78:67; Ps. 89:38; Ps. 106:24; Ps. 118:22; Prov. 3:11; Prov. 15:32; Isa. 5:24; Isa. 7:15; Isa. 7:16; Isa. 8:6; Isa. 30:12; Isa. 31:7; Isa. 33:8; Isa. 33:15; Isa. 41:9; Isa. 54:6; Jer. 2:37; Jer. 4:30; Jer. 6:19; Jer. 6:30; Jer. 7:29; Jer. 8:9; Jer. 14:19; Jer. 31:37; Jer. 33:24; Jer. 33:26; Lam. 5:22; Ezek. 5:6; Ezek. 20:13; Ezek. 20:16; Ezek. 20:24; Ezek. 21:10; Ezek. 21:13; Hos. 4:6; Hos. 9:17; Amos 2:4; Amos 5:21

G Campbell Morgan - Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord; He hath also rejected thee from being king.—1 Sam. 15.23.

The appointments of God are always conditional. If the Conditions upon which they are made are not fulfilled, they cease. Saul was surely chosen of God, and by Him appointed to the office of king over this people. But that position had been clearly defined for him from the beginning. If the people had rejected Jehovah from being their King (see 1Sa 8.7), He had not given them up, nor resigned His position as their King. Granting them their request for a king, He had not for a moment ceased to reign. From the first, Saul had been instructed by Samuel that he was but to reveal and exercise the Divine authority. His one law in all his exercise of the Kingly office must be the word of Jehovah. When, leaning to his own understanding, he failed to act according to that word, he forfeited his right to rule. Therefore God rejected him from being king. It is ever so.

In His grace God calls men to positions of high responsibility and authority; and in doing so, ever makes clear the conditions upon which they will be able to discharge that responsibility and exercise that authority. If they fail in any degree to fulfil those conditions, they are unable to do the work to which they are appointed. Then without any compromise they are rejected of God from the position. There are no appointments in the economy of the Kingdom of God which are perpetual, save as those holding them are carrying out the appointed work by fulfilling the revealed conditions. However successful in the higher senses a servant of God may be, if he or she depart from the law of God conditioning that service, they will become "castaway" from that service. (Borrow [Life applications from every chapter of the Bible](#))

90-PERCENT OBEDIENCE?

"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you." - 1 Samuel 15:23

As the father of an elementary-age boy, I think I know why God places so much emphasis on obedience. Boys can get themselves into so much difficulty so easily. I can't imagine the trouble they would get into if they weren't required to obey anyone.

Take, for instance, my rule about crossing the street. Steven knows that he's supposed to stop at the end of the driveway and look both ways -- whether he is riding his bike, rollerblading, or just chasing a ball. I expect 100-percent obedience because I know that it takes only one careless step into the street to jeopardize his safety.

When God sent Saul to attack the Amalekites for what they had done to Israel (Exodus 17:8; 1 Samuel. 15:2), He expected the king to obey Him completely. When he didn't, Saul not only failed Israel but he disappointed God. And he had to suffer the results of disobedience. As Samuel told him, God "has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

The Lord, who is a perfect Father, loves us and knows what will work out best in our lives. To show that we trust Him, we need to do all we can to obey what He has told us in the Bible, His Word. He deserves our 100-percent obedience. - J. David Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Let your days be Mine to order;
Where I lead, obedient be.
Let your own desires be nothing;
Only seek to follow Me.
-- Anon.

The cost of obedience is nothing compared to the cost of disobedience.

[How To Have A Revival](#)

1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:24 κα ε πεν Σαουλ πρ ς Σαμουηλ μ ρηκα τι παρ βην τ ν λ γον κυρ ου κα τ μ σου τι φοβ θην τ ν λα ν κα κουσα τ ς φων ς α τ ν

LXE 1 Samuel 15:24 And Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned, in that I have transgressed the word of the Lord and thy direction; for I feared the people, and I hearkened to their voice.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have disobeyed what the LORD commanded and what you said as well. For I was afraid of the army, and I followed their wishes.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:24 Saul answered Samuel, "I have sinned. I have transgressed the LORD's command and your words. Because I was afraid of the people, I obeyed them.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:24 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.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:24 Then Saul admitted to Samuel, "Yes, I have sinned. I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD's command, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:24 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.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:24 Saul then said to Samuel, 'I have sinned, having broken Yahweh's order and your instructions because I was afraid of the people and yielded to their demands.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:24 Saul replied to Samuel: "I have sinned, for I have disobeyed the command of the LORD and your instructions. In my fear of the people, I did what they said.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:24 And Saul saith unto Samuel, 'I have sinned, for I passed over the command of Jehovah, and thy words; because I have feared the people, I also hearken to their voice;

- **I have sinned:** 1Sa 15:30 Ex 9:27 10:16 Nu 22:34 2Sa 12:13 Mt 27:4
- **I feared:** 1Sa 15:9,15 Ex 23:2 Job 31:34 Pr 29:25 Isa 51:12,13 Lu 23:20-25 Ga 1:10 Rev 21:8
- **obeyed:** 1Sa 2:29 Ge 3:12,17 Jer 38:5
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

WEAK EXCUSES FROM A MAN OF WEAK CHARACTER!

Then - Marks progression in the dialogue. Saul will now respond. But he responds like the little boy who got caught with his hand in the cookie jar! His response is not from a broken and contrite heart because of his sin against Yahweh. It is more out of regret or remorse rather than out of godly sorrow that leads to true repentance. (Read 2Co 7:9-11+).

Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words If Saul had just stopped with these words of genuine, humble, contrite confession! But no, Saul's "confession" is a confession without repentance, for he continues to make excuses and still tries to preserve his honor before the people (1Sa 15:30 - more worried about what people think than about what God thinks! Can any of us identify?) Genuine confession is agreeing with God about our sin, not excusing it. And so once again he rationalizes why he sinned, etc. He refuses to say HE IS THE PROBLEM, HIS REBELLIOUS HEART IS THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM! And yet God allows Saul to continue to reign and be used by God to train up the next king who will face trial after trial because of Saul. Saul's continued reign also demonstrates how a man who will go his own way, rather than God's way, will progress deeper and deeper into sin until his life ends in destruction (Pr 14:12, 16:25)!

THOUGHT- Beloved, read and heed 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11, 12+, that you may not imitate this man who had such a promising beginning. Your choices today matter! They matter in both time and eternity. Choose wisely! Choose God's Way. Choose Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)!

Compare Saul's "confession" to another "king" over 400 years earlier - "Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, **"I have sinned this time; the LORD is the righteous one, and I and my people are the wicked ones"** (Exodus 9:27+) Was Saul's "confession" any different? Just wondering?

Wiersbe - True confession involves more than saying "I have sinned"; it means repentance and true sorrow for sin. (Borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

Rod Mattoon - Saul is rebuked by Samuel and is informed he has been rejected by the Lord. THEN Saul says, "I have sinned." Saul makes another switch, replacing his reputation for his character. Twice Saul states, "I have sinned." The sincerity of this man is in question because true sorrow is expressed before you get caught. Saul only seems concerned about what everyone thinks about him instead of his inward **character**. It was Abe Lincoln who said, "**Reputation** and **character** can be compared to a tree. **Character** is the tree and **reputation** is the shadow cast by the tree." In other words your **character** will determine your **reputation**. **Reputation** is what people think we are and **character** is what God knows we are. D.L. Moody said, "**Character** is what a person is in the dark when no one is watching." Saul was absolutely consumed with what people thought of him. He was very weak in godly character. Beloved, don't make Saul's mistake. If you start living to please people you are going to be in trouble. If you are consumed with your reputation, you will start doing what Saul did and cut corners and make excuses. You will be caught between what God thinks and what people think and that is a very frustrating place to be. Solomon warned, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25) What should be of premium importance to us is personal integrity ([1 Samuel Commentary](#) - RECOMMENDED - 616 pages - Go to page for list of multiple illustrations on page 596)"

How would you describe your character?

How would you evaluate your reputation?
Do they match?

John Trapp - When he could deny it no longer, at length he maketh a forced and feigned confession; drawn thereto, more by the danger and damage of his sin, than by the offence; mincing and making the best of an ill matter.

because I feared the people and listened ([shama](#); Lxx = [akouo](#)) **to their voice** - He persists in refusing to take personal responsibility for the disobedience. He gives two weak excuses. He the king of the people, **feared** the people! Is this the same man who gave such a rash, harsh command to his soldiers not to eat food on the day of battle? If there was ever a chance that there might have been a revolt against him, that would have been the occasion. Now we hear weak excuse number two which is that he **listened to** (meaning "obeyed") the people! These words should have stuck in his mouth, for the truth is that he refused to listen (repeatedly) to voice of Samuel, God's mouthpiece and therefore refused to listen to God!

Adam Clarke on "**because I feared the people**" "Had he feared God more, he need have feared the people less." (ED: ALTHOUGH I QUESTION WHETHER HE TRULY FEARED THE PEOPLE AND WAS JUST USING THEM AS A LAME EXCUSE)

John Butler - **CONFESSION 1 Samuel 15:24** - [Butler's Sermon Starters](#)

"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 Samuel 15:24).

Saul made quite a statement here. It was under duress and was not sincere as the context reveals, but the statement, which is a confession, is still very instructive about the sin.

FIRST—THE CONFESSION OF SIN

"I have sinned." Everyone needs to make this basic confession to God. Unless you confess that you have sinned, you cannot be forgiven. Saul had certainly sinned. He had not destroyed the enemy as he was suppose to do and furthermore he had kept some of the spoils which he was also not suppose to do. Many would not call Saul's actions sin, but would call it expediency. Men have quite a habit of calling sin by other names to make the deed sound less evil. As an example, men call drunkenness a disease, abortion is called women's rights, homosexuality is simply called a different life style. It is protected even though it has brought much death (AIDS). Yes, Saul's conduct would not be called evil today. In fact, to call it sin will offend many.

SECOND—THE CHARACTER OF SIN

"I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD." The commandment of God is the rule that determines what is righteous and what is not righteous. God is the One who decides whether something is sin or not. Our culture and political correctness are not the foundation for our right and wrong beliefs. They are simply that which are often used to justify evil by calling it something other than sin. Saul disobeyed the commandment of God and that is sin. Sin does not submit to God's ways. You may not be politically correct or act according to your culture, but that does not necessarily make you sinful.

THIRD—THE CAUSE OF SIN

"I feared the people and obeyed their voice." Saul did two things here that caused his sin.

- His attitude about the people. "I feared the people." This means he wanted the people's approval. He wanted to be popular with the people. That is a sure way to corruption. Politicians are this way, and many others, be they an insignificant person or important person. But folk need to fear what God thinks of them more than what people think of them. People were more important than God to Saul. Many are in the same boat, and it is sinking fast.
- His acquiescence to the people. "I obeyed their voice." This is the inevitable result of fearing the people. When you are concerned about what people think and whether or not you are popular among the people, you will end up doing what they tell you to do instead of what God tells you to do. And what they tell you to do is seldom what God tells you to do. You cannot fear the people and obeyed their voice and still fear God and obey His voice.

1 Samuel 15:25 "Now therefore, please **pardon my sin and **return** with me, that I may worship the LORD."**

BGT 1 Samuel 15:25 καὶ νῦν ἄρτι μὲν ὁ ἁμαρτήματός μου ἀφαιρέσθαι καὶ νῦν στρέψων μετὰ μοῦ καὶ προσκυνῶ σω κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:25 And now remove, I pray thee, my sin, and turn back with me, and I will worship the Lord thy God.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:25 Now please forgive my sin! Go back with me so I can worship the LORD."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:25 Now therefore, please forgive my sin and return with me so I can worship the LORD."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the LORD."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:25 Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:25 But now, please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the LORD."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:25 Now therefore, I pray, pardon my sin, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:25 Now, please forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I can worship Yahweh.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:25 Now forgive my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:25 and now, bear, I pray thee, with my sin, and turn back with me, and I bow myself to Jehovah.'

- pardon: Ex 10:17
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Now therefore, please pardon (salach) my sin - Saul is so self-deceived (or so into SELF), that he considers 1Sa 15:24 a genuine confession of his heinous sin against God! He is theologically correct that if we confess (truly confess) our sins to God, He will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1Jn 1:9+). And so he pleads for **pardon** (actually in Hebrew it is a command as if one could command a pardon!) But even here one has to ask of whom is he asking the pardon? The way the text reads, it is as if Saul is going to Samuel as some religions do seeking a human being to forgive their sins!

And return with me, that I may worship (shachah; Lxx = proskuneo - bow down) the LORD (cf repeat request in 1Sa 15:30+) - He is concerned about getting Samuel's visible support in front of the people. We haven't heard the word **worship** from his lips until now. From all we have seen about Saul in this chapter to this point, do you really believe he truly desires to bow down before the LORD? While Saul does not say "your LORD" here, in 1Sa 15:30 he does say "I may worship the LORD **your** God." I can find no statement where Saul ever says "**MY LORD**." He doesn't even react to God's verdict that he is removed as king!

Pardon (forgive) (05545) **salach** means to free from or release from something and so to pardon, to forgive, to spare. God's offer of pardon and forgiveness to sinners. Salach is never used of people forgiving each other but used of God forgiving. Jehovah Himself announces, in response to Moses' prayers for Israel, that He has forgiven Israel at two of their darkest moments, the golden calf incident and the murmuring at Kadesh Barnea (Ex 34:9; Nu 14:19-20).

Worship (bow down, prostrate one's self) (07812) **shachah** means to bow down, to prostrate oneself, to crouch, to fall down, to humbly beseech, to do reverence, to worship. The idea is to assume a prostrate position as would in paying homage to royalty (Ge 43:28) or to God (Ge 24:26, Ps 95:6).

Shachach in 1-2 Samuel - 1 Sam. 1:3; 1 Sam. 1:19; 1 Sam. 1:28; 1 Sam. 2:36; 1 Sam. 15:25; 1 Sam. 15:30; 1 Sam. 15:31; 1 Sam. 20:41; 1 Sam. 24:8; 1 Sam. 25:23; 1 Sam. 25:41; 1 Sam. 28:14; 2 Sam. 1:2; 2 Sam. 9:6; 2 Sam. 9:8; 2 Sam. 12:20; 2 Sam. 14:4; 2 Sam. 14:22; 2 Sam. 14:33; 2 Sam. 15:5; 2 Sam. 15:32; 2 Sam. 16:4; 2 Sam. 18:21; 2 Sam. 18:28; 2 Sam. 24:20;

1 Samuel 15:26 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."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:26 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ πρ ς Σαουλ ο κ ναστρ φω μετ σο τι ξουδ νωσας τ μα κυρ ου κα ξουδεν σει σε κ ριος το μ ε ναι βασιλ α π τ ν Ισραηλ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:26 And Samuel said to Saul, I will not turn back with thee, for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord will reject thee from being king over Israel.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:26 Samuel said to Saul, "I will not go back with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel!"

CSB 1 Samuel 15:26 Samuel replied to Saul, "I will not return with you. Because you rejected the word of the LORD, the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:26 And 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."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:26 But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!"

NLT 1 Samuel 15:26 But Samuel replied, "I will not go back with you! Since you have rejected the LORD's command, he has rejected you as king of Israel."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:26 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."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:26 Samuel said to Saul, 'I will not come back with you, since you have rejected Yahweh's word and Yahweh has rejected you as king of Israel.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, because you rejected the command of the LORD and the LORD rejects you as king of Israel."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:26 And Samuel saith unto Saul, 'I do not turn back with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, and Jehovah doth reject thee from being king over Israel.'

- **I will not:** 1Sa 15:31 Ge 42:38 43:11-14 Lu 24:28,29 2Jn 1:11
- **for you:** 1Sa 15:23 2:30 13:14 16:1 Jer 6:19 Ho 4:6
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL'S REFUSAL TO RETURN AND HIS REASON

But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you - Recall Samuel had been up all night and was stirred by a righteous anger so that it was easy for him to refuse to return with Saul. There is nothing else for Samuel to say. Samuel's statement reflects God's evaluation of Saul.

For - Term of explanation. Samuel repeats an earlier verdict as justification for not returning.

You have rejected the word of the LORD([ma'as](#); [Lxx](#) = [exoutheneo](#) = despised, treated with contempt), **and the LORD has rejected** ([ma'as](#); [Lxx](#) = [exoutheneo](#)) **you from being king over Israel** - Samuel refused to return because Saul had **rejected** His LORD which resulted in the LORD rejecting him as king. Why would Samuel want to return and participate in sham worship with Saul? That's a rhetorical question.

[Guzik](#) has an interesting thought - Why would Samuel say, "I will not return with you" when Saul just wanted him to worship with him? Because that worship would no doubt include sacrifice, and offering some of the animals that Saul wickedly spared from the Amalekites.

[Life Application Study Bible](#) ([borrow](#)) - Saul's excuses had come to an end. It was the time of reckoning. God wasn't rejecting Saul as a person; the king could still seek forgiveness and restore his relationship with God, but it was too late to get his kingdom back. If you do not act responsibly with what God has entrusted to you, eventually you will run out of excuses. All of us must one day give an account for our actions (Romans 14:12; Revelation 22:12).

Partial Obedience By Rev. Richard S. Sharpe, Jr.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:1–23, especially from verse 22

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.

Introduction: Anyone who has children knows what partial obedience is. We can send our children to clean their rooms and they come out after a couple of minutes and say it's all done. When we check, we find they've taken all the toys off the floor and thrown them into the closet; and that's their idea of cleaning. The Lord gives us commands to obey. We think that we can just obey part way and the Lord will be happy. Saul discovered the hard way that the Lord doesn't want partial obedience. As we look into this text, we learn what He expects from His people.

1. The Orders (vv. 3–5). God was not vague in His command: "Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." These people had not given the Israelites help when they were traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land of Canaan. The Lord waited until they had conquered the land of Canaan and established a king before He sent them on this mission. The orders were plain. We might think it's cruel of God to have all the people of a nation killed, but the Lord knew what the descendants of this nation would do in the future if they stayed alive (Esth. 3:1). God, then, was more merciful to cut off the offspring of a rebellious nation than to allow them to continue to reproduce. They had passed "Redemption Point." In any case, God knows every detail, and we can only guess at why He commanded as He did, but there's no guessing as to whether it was the right thing!

2. The Battle (vv. 5–9). King Saul went to the valley outside the city of Amalek. He told the Kenites to leave the area before the battle because they had treated the Israelites well when they came out of Egypt. The Kenites left. Saul slew some of the Amalekites, but he took the king of the Amalekites, Agag, captive. They also saved the best of the sheep and other animals "... and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed." They didn't obey the command. They saved the best of the animals and the king of the Amalekites.

3. The Confrontation (vv. 10–23). Samuel was told of the Lord to go to King Saul. He told Samuel, I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me (v. 11a). It grieved Samuel so much that he cried to the Lord all night (v. 11b). Samuel rose early in the morning and went to Saul. Saul claimed to have kept the command of God by winning the battle. What Saul didn't realize is that God wasn't interested in who won; He was interested in His will being done! Saul claimed he had saved the cattle to sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel's response is an excellent lesson for us, "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" (v. 22).

Conclusion: This historical account in the history of Israel has a lesson for us to learn. The Lord has not changed between Testaments. He is the same. He wants us to obey His commands on a regular basis. Samuel compares rebellion against the commands of the Lord with witchcraft and stubbornness against the commands of the Lord with idolatry.

After accepting Christ as our Savior, we are to live in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. That life would include obeying the commands He has given us. Are we obeying the commands we find in the Word of God? Are we attending church on a regular basis? Are we tithing to the Lord on a regular basis? Are we witnessing to others about our Lord on a regular basis? Are we manifesting the fruit of the Spirit to each other on a regular basis?

Incomplete obedience always boomerangs, and the sins we secretly tolerate in our lives can rise up when we least expect it and ravage us. One man told of a boa constrictor he had for a pet. His family had taken it in when just a baby snake and had raised it. It had become the family pet, and they had a cute name for it. But one day, he walked into the nursery to find that the boa constrictor had coiled around the child and was squeezing the life from the baby. It took all the man's strength to pull it away and, in the nick of time, to save his child. He said, "We had thought it a cute thing, a pet; we thought we could control it, but it nearly ruined our lives." I wonder if someone here today is tolerating some habit you think you can control. Ephesians 4:27 says, "Do not give the devil a foothold" (NIV).

Ron Handley, the head of Fellowship of Christian Athletes, speaking at a conference in New Mexico, said that the subtlety of sin and of compromise is so great that he meets with a group of friends each Monday and they ask each other these ten questions:

1. Have you spent daily time in Scriptures and in prayer?
2. Have you had any flirtatious or lustful attitudes, tempting thought or exposed yourself to any explicit materials that would not glorify God?
3. Have you been completely above reproach in your financial dealings?
4. Have you spent quality time with family and friends?
5. Have you done your 100% best in your job, school, etc.?
6. Have you told any half-truths or outright lies, putting yourself in a better light to those around you?
7. Have you shared the gospel with an unbeliever this week?
8. Have you taken care of your body through daily physical exercise and proper eating and sleeping habits?

9. Have you allowed any person or circumstances to rob you of your joy?
10. Have you lied to us on any of your answers today.¹

F B Meyer - Failure under the Supreme Test)1 SAMUEL 15:26)

Mortal! if life smile on thee, and thou find
All to thy mind,
Think, Who did once from Heaven to Hell descend
Thee to befriend!
So shalt thou dare forego at his dear call
Thy Best—thine All.

—KEBLE.

ON the shores of the Dead Sea, encrusted with salt, lie the trunks of many noble trees which have been torn from their roots, and carried by the rapid Jordan in its flow from the uplands of Galilee toward the depression of that remarkable gorge; and as they line those desolate shores they remind us of lives which God planted to bear fruit and give shade, which have not fulfilled his original purpose in their creation, and which have been torn up by the roots and borne down to the sea of death. Conspicuous among such failures is that of Saul, the first king of Israel.

It is impossible to turn to these pages without lamenting that the bright promise of his early life was so soon overcast; and that he, who stood forth in the morning of his life amid the acclaim of his people as likely to do marvellous work for his fatherland, became one of those whom the sacred writers describe as having failed of the high purpose of their life, been rejected in their mission, and cast away as tools from the hands of the great Artificer.

This chapter gives the story of the final rejection of Saul, which had indeed been threatened aforetime, but which now befell.

I. THE TEST OF THE DIVINE SUMMONS AND COMMAND.—“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” (ver. 3).

This command was given after several years had intervened from the incident narrated in the previous chapter; and during those years Saul had met with marvellous encouragement. The handful of men who had followed him, trembling, had increased to a great army, properly disciplined and armed, and led by Abner, his uncle. He had also waged very successful wars against Moab and the children of Ammon on the East, against Edom on the South, and against the kings of Zobah on the North. In whatever direction he had directed his arms, he had been victorious beyond his highest hopes. It is also evident that he had gathered around him considerable state, for we find the royal table was reserved for himself, Abner, and Jonathan; that he was surrounded by a bodyguard of runners; and that his will was law. The kingdom that had been inaugurated amid such adverse circumstances was beginning to enforce respect, and Saul was able to vie, both in the magnificence of his state and in the army that followed him, with the kings of the lands that bordered on Canaan.

It was at this time that the supreme test entered his life, as it so often comes to us in days of prosperity. In the warm summer days we are most in dread of corruption and contagion, and it is in the days of prosperity that the soul is oftenest subjected, not realizing the significance of the ordeal, to its supreme test. If of late you have had immunity from special adversity, if your circumstances have been easy and comfortable, if paths that were once difficult have become smooth and easy—be on your guard; for, at such a time as ye think not, the Son of Man comes to call you to his bar.

You will notice, also, that this supreme test gave him a final chance of retrieving the past. At Gilgal, years before, God had told him by the lips of Samuel that his kingdom should not continue; but there had been no sentence of his own deposition or rejection, and it seemed as though this last command was put into his life to give him an opportunity of wiping out his former failure and mistake, and of retrieving the fortunes that had seemed to be absolutely sacrificed.

God often comes to us, when we have made some sad and apparently irretrievable mistake. He gives us yet another opportunity of reversing the past, as when our Lord said to his disciples in the Garden of the Olive-press: “Sleep on now, and take your rest”; a moment afterward adding, “Arise, let us be going,” as though a fresh opportunity would be afforded of fellowship in his sufferings.

The Divine command involved the absolute extermination of the Amalekites; for the word translated “utterly destroy,” would be better rendered devote. It is the word so often used in the Book of Joshua for placing under the ban the sin-infected cities of the Canaanites. It was understood that, in the case of the “devoted” city, man, woman, and child, and the very beasts, must be destroyed, and only the precious metals kept, after being passed through the fires of purification (Num. 31:21, etc.). With such absolute devastation and destruction was the name of Amalek to be wiped out from under heaven.

There had been feud between Amalek and Israel from the earliest days. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I have marked that which Amalek did to Israel, how he set himself against him in the way, when he came up out of Egypt" (ver. 2). You will remember that Moses reared an altar, and called it Jehovah-nissi—"the Lord my banner"; because he said that the Lord would have war with Amalek, until He had wiped out the reproach of his people (Ex. 17:16). Centuries had passed, and this ancient threat had remained unfulfilled until this hour, and now the command was given, "Go and smite Amalek."

At first it seems very terrible that God demanded this act of obedience from Saul; but on the other hand the Amalekites, as we are told in ver. 18, were sinners of a very black and aggravated type, "Utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed." We learn also from ver. 33 that Agag with his sword had often made women childless. A very cruel and rapacious tribe of robbers were these Amalekites, who were constantly making raids upon the southern frontier of Judah. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, for the safety of the chosen people, that their power to injure should be permanently arrested, and their claws drawn.

Even in this world God sets up his judgment seat; and as our Saviour tells us in his last wonderful discourse, the Son of Man sits upon the throne of his glory, while the nations are gathered before Him, and He separates them as the sheep from the goats. These words, without doubt, portend some imposing event, which we are to witness in that great day, when the King of the Ages will call to his bar every nation and kindred, people and tongue, and will announce his awards. But we cannot suppose, for a single moment, that the judgment of the nations is to be altogether relegated to that final day. Throughout the history of the world the nations have been standing before Christ's bar. Nineveh stood there, Babylon stood there, Greece and Rome stood there, Spain and France stood there, and Great Britain is standing there to-day. One after another has had the solemn award—depart, and they have passed into a destruction which has been absolute and irretrievable.

The Amalekites had stood before the bar of God, had been weighed in his balances, and found wanting. Their sentence had been pronounced, and Saul was called upon to inflict it. But remember that Saul was only doing summarily and suddenly that which otherwise would follow in the natural process of decay, for God has so constituted us that when we sin against the laws of truth, purity, and righteousness, decay immediately sets in by an inevitable law. If Amalek had never been attacked by Saul and his hosts, the vices that were already at work in the heart of the people must have led to the utter undoing and consumption of the nation. It is said of families in our great cities, infected with the evils that are rife among us, that in five generations they die out, having lost the power of self-propagation; and what is true of a family is equally so of a nation. We may infer that there was therefore mercy in this Divine ordinance. It was infinitely better for Amalek, and for the surrounding peoples which would have become infected by her slow deterioration, that by one stroke of the executioner's axe the existence of the nation should be brought to an end.

II. OBEDIENCE WITH RESERVE.—The story is told us in ver. 9: "But Saul and the people spared Agag." When he raised his standard, 200,000 footmen from Israel, and 10,000 men of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon gathered around it at Telaim, on the southern frontier; and they came to the chief city of Amalek, which lay, probably, a little to the south of Hebron.

After lying in ambush in some dry water-course, or wady, and having given notice to the Kenites—a peaceful, friendly people—to depart, the attacking army carried the city by assault, put to the sword men, women, and children; pursued the fleeing remnants of the Amalekites from Havilah even to Shur, the great wall of Egypt; and with the exception of Agag, and a few that may have escaped, and the choice of the flocks and herds, the whole country was rid of its inhabitants, and reduced to the deathlike silence of an awful solitude.

Saul returned, flushed with triumph, reared a monument of victory in the oasis of Carmel, near to Hebron; and then came down to the sacred site of Gilgal, that he might sacrifice to the Lord, and perhaps divide the vast plunder of sheep and goats, of oxen and camels, which had fallen into his hands, and which he and the people had been loath to destroy. "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 everything that was vile and refuse, they destroyed utterly."

Whether this reserve was due, so far as Saul was concerned, to greed, as appears most likely, or because, as he says in ver. 24, he feared to thwart the people, obeying their voice rather than the voice of God, we cannot decide; but considerable light is thrown on the incident by the startling expression used by Samuel in ver. 19, when he says, "Why didst thou fly upon the spoil?" employing the same expression as in chapter 14:32, where we are told that the people, in their ravenous hunger, flew upon the spoil, and ate even with the blood. The same passionate vehemence seems to have characterised Saul and the men of Israel. Surely rapacity and greed were at work, and before their boiling currents all the bulwarks of principle and conscience were swept away.

There is great significance in this for us all. We are prepared to obey the Divine commands up to a certain point, and there we stay. Just as soon as "the best and choicest" begin to be touched, we draw the line and refuse further compliance. We listen to soft voices that bid us stay our hand, when our Isaac is on the altar. We are quite prepared to give up that which costs us nothing—our money, but not our children—to the missionary cause; the things which are clearly and disgracefully wrong, but not the self-

indulgences which are peculiarly fascinating to our temperament. Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life—only spare him that, and he will cheerfully renounce his claim to all else. There is always a tendency with the best of us to make a bargain with God, and sacrifice all to his will, if only He will permit us to spare Agag and the best of the spoil.

But an even deeper reading of this story is permissible. Throughout the Bible Amalek stands for the flesh, having sprung from the stock of Esau, who, for a morsel of meat, steaming fragrantly in the air, sold his birthright. To spare the best of Amalek is surely equivalent to sparing some root of evil, some plausible indulgence, some favourite sin. For us, Agag must stand for that evil propensity, which exists in all of us, for self-gratification; and to spare Agag is to be merciful to ourselves, to exonerate and palliate our failures, and to condone our besetting sin.

Is this your case? You are willing to give Christ the key of every cupboard in your heart, save one; but that contains your most cherished sin, for which you find manifold excuses, and to retain which you are prepared to sacrifice everything else. Thus Ananias and Sapphira kept back part of the price, and were cut off from the ranks of the Church.

It is startling to learn that Saul perished, on the field of Gilboa, by the hand of an Amalekite (2 Sam. 1:1–10). What a remarkable fact! The least instructed can decipher the lesson. He who runs may read. If we spare ourselves, forbearing to cut off the right hand or foot, which may be causing us to offend, we shall certainly perish by the hand of that which we refused to part with. Our cherished indulgences will bring about our undoing. The love of God, foreseeing the risk we are incurring, pleads with us to destroy without mercy the enemies of our own peace; but Agag comes to us delicately, we forbear to inflict the Divine sentence, and presently we are stricken down by the hand of the assassin, dye the greensward with our life-blood, and are despoiled of our crown, which is transferred to another.

Moreover, presently, Samuel arrives to speak the Divine sentence of deposition: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king."

1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:27 καὶ πῶς στρέψεν Σαμουὴλ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ τὸ πρὸς τὴν ἐξοδὸν καὶ κρῆψεν Σαουλ τὸν ἵμτιον αὐτοῦ διὰ τὸ ἵμτιον αὐτοῦ καὶ διῆρξεν αὐτὸν

LXE 1 Samuel 15:27 And Samuel turned his face to depart, and Saul caught hold of the skirt of his garment, and tore it.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:27 When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the edge of his robe and it tore.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:27 When Samuel turned to go, Saul grabbed the hem of his robe, and it tore.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul tried to hold him back and tore the hem of his robe.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned away to leave, Saul caught at the hem of his cloak and it tore,

NAB 1 Samuel 15:27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized a loose end of his mantle, and it tore off.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:27 And Samuel turneth round to go, and he layeth hold on the skirt of his upper robe -- and it is rent!

- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL PRESENTS SAUL AN OBJECT LESSON

As Samuel turned to go, Saul seized the edge of his robe, and it tore -Saul still has not reacted to the rejection verdict. It is almost as if he is not hearing it or receiving it. So God orchestrates a word picture that even Saul cannot fail to grasp. Saul is trying to hold on to Samuel (and presumably Samuel's LORD), but God makes sure the cloth tears in Saul's hand.

1 Samuel 15:28 So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:28 κα ε πεν πρ ς α τ ν Σαμουηλ δι ρρηξεν κ ριος τ ν βασιλε αν Ισραηλ κ χειρ ς σου σ μερον κα δ σει α τ ν τ πλησ ον σου τ γαθ π ρ σ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel said to him, The Lord has rent thy kingdom from Israel out of thy hand this day, and will give it to thy neighbour who is better than thou.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:28 Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to one of your colleagues who is better than you!

CSB 1 Samuel 15:28 Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingship of Israel away from you today and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:28 Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors--to one better than you.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to someone else-- one who is better than you.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this very day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:28 and Samuel said to him, 'Today Yahweh has torn the kingdom of Israel from you and given it to a neighbour of yours who is better than you.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:28 So Samuel said to him: "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel saith unto him, 'Jehovah hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee to-day, and given it to thy neighbour who is better than thou;

- The Lord: 1Sa 28:17,18 1Ki 11:30,31
- hath given: 1Sa 2:7,8 Jer 27:5,6 Da 4:17,32 Joh 19:11 Ro 13:1
- a neighbour: 1Sa 13:14 16:12 Ac 13:22
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

1 Samuel 28:17-18 "The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. 18 "As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day.

TORN ROYAL ROBE PICTURED TORN ROYAL THRONE

So - Term of conclusion. In light of Samuel's torn robe, Samuel gives a concluding explanation for what has just transpire.

Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you - So just in case Saul has yet to grasp that he is now a divinely rejected king after two clear declarations, this symbolic tearing would leave no doubt that Yahweh had torn the kingdom from Saul. Samuel also offers what amounts to a prophecy by telling Saul that a man better than him will be the recipient of the crown from God. For a similar incident, see 1Ki 11:30.

Guzik - As useless as the torn piece of robe was in his hand, so now his leadership of the nation was futile. Now he ruled against God, not for Him. Just as the robe tore because Saul grasped it too tightly, so his tight grip on pride and stubbornness meant the

kingdom would be taken away from him. In this respect Saul was the opposite of Jesus, of whom it is said He had always been God by nature, did not cling to His prerogatives as God's Equal, but stripped Himself of all privilege by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born as a mortal man (Philippians 2:6–7, J.B. Phillips translation). Jesus was willing to let go, but Saul insisted in clinging on. So Saul lost all, while Jesus gained all.

Brian Bell - What was the losses Saul incurred for disobeying God's word? 1. He lost his character; He lost his friend Samuel; He lost his crown. 2. He had so many advantages, but he didn't cultivate his spiritual life. Have you ever thought, If I obey God & serve Him devotedly in all these areas of my life, surely He will let me have my way in this one area!

James Smith - SAUL, THE CASTAWAY 1 Samuel 15

“Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as He wills ...
... He seeks not that His altars
Blaze—careless how, so that they do but blaze.”
—BROWNING.

There is a zeal that is not according to knowledge, but which is a defiance of knowledge, a violation of the Word of God and of conscience. In seeking to serve God with our own will, while we reject His, we are as it were offering swines' flesh upon His altar. The Lord will have His altar blaze, but the sacrifice must be blameless. It would seem from these words, “Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord” (v. 1), that God was loath to withdraw His favour from Saul. Such is His lingering grace which gives room for repentance. Saul is to have another chance to show himself faithful to God. Notice his—

I. Commission. “Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all” (v. 3). His orders were plain and explicit. Amalek, like Jericho, was to be entirely devoted to destruction (Joshua 6:17, marg.). Neither his feelings nor reason must stand in the way of the fulfilment of the divine purpose. When we have the Lord's bidding to go, even though it should be on the water, it is ours confidently to obey.

II. Disobedience. “But Saul spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, ... and all that was good” (v. 9). The command was spare not, but he spared. He allowed his eye to govern his actions, so he walked not by faith but by sight. His natural instincts, as a judge of and dealer in cattle, overruled the direct Word of God; so he spared the best, and utterly destroyed the vile and the refuse. It is always easy to devote to God that which we do not want. Will He be pleased with the vile and the refuse while we spare the best for our own purposes? Whenever self-interest is allowed a place in our service for the Lord it is sure to be at the cost of faithfulness to Him.

III. Self-Justification. This is a very sad and melancholy episode in the life of Saul. May we take it as a trumpet-warning against self-deception. The Lord said to Samuel, “Saul hath not performed my commandments” (v. 11). And when Samuel met Saul, after he had been triumphantly setting up a monument of his victory, he said with the utmost complacency, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” (vv. 12, 13). At the same time the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that he had spared as spoil were a solemn mockery in the sight of God. Like the crowing of the cock to Peter, they might have reminded Saul of his sin. But this was not all. When Samuel charged him with “not obeying the voice of the Lord,” he answered, “Yea, I have obeyed” (v. 20). It is pitiful in the extreme to be seeking at any time to persuade ourselves that we are right with God when He had emphatically declared that we have “turned back.” “Be not deceived, God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7). The eyes of the Lord are upon us, as they were on Saul, watching whether we are faithful to Him and His Word. Every act of disobedience is an act of rebellion against God.

IV. Confession. Samuel had to be faithful with Saul, although he was deeply grieved at his failure, and had spent the whole night in “Crying unto the Lord” (v. 11). “To obey is better than sacrifice,” he said, and “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (vv. 22, 23). Saul discovered that the secret, selfish motives of his heart had blossomed and brought forth fruit that was sure to grow fearfully bitter, so he confessed, “I have sinned: I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice” (v. 24). Ah! the secret is out. He feared the people, and the fear of man ensnared his soul (Prov. 29:25). Are there not multitudes of young, vigorous, gifted lives around us that are wrecked and ruined for the service of God through the very same reason—the fear of man. “Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shalt die?” (Isa. 51:12). Any backboneless soul can be a coward. Put on the armour of God, and ye shall be able to stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13).

V. Rejection. “Samuel said unto Saul, Thou hast rejected the Word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king” (v. 26). To reject God's Word is to be rejected of God (Luke 9:26). He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar. Saul's seeming repentance and confession had come too late. The moorings of God's guiding presence was cut; Saul's life was now a drifting wreck.

“There is a line by us unseen,
That crosses every path;

The hidden boundary between
God's patience and His wrath."

"The Strength of Israel will not lie" (v. 29). He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. What a vain show our life must be if it is not lived for the glory of God. Saul may still retain the favour of the people, but, alas, the Spirit of God had departed from him (chap. 16:14). It is possible to be a Christian, and, like Saul, a "partaker of the Holy Ghost," yet the life, through being disobedient to the heavenly vision, may become a wilderness waste to itself, a stumbling-block to others, and an offence to God.

1 Samuel 15:29 "Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:29 καὶ διαίρεθ σεται Ἰσραὴλ εἰς δύο καὶ ὁ κ ο κ ποστρ ψει ο δ μετανο σει τι ο χ ς νθρωπ ς στιν το μετανο σαι α τ ς

LXE 1 Samuel 15:29 And Israel shall be divided to two: and God will not turn nor repent, for he is not as a man to repent.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:29 The Preeminent One of Israel does not go back on his word or change his mind, for he is not a human being who changes his mind."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:29 Furthermore, the Eternal One of Israel does not lie or change His mind, for He is not man who changes his mind."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:29 And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:29 And he who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will he change his mind, for he is not human that he should change his mind!"

NRS 1 Samuel 15:29 Moreover the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind; for he is not a mortal, that he should change his mind."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:29 (The Glory of Israel, however, does not lie or go back on his word, not being human and liable to go back on his word.)

NAB 1 Samuel 15:29 The Glory of Israel neither retracts nor repents, for he is not man that he should repent."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:29 and also, the Pre-eminence of Israel doth not lie nor repent, for He is not a man to be penitent.

- **Glory of Israel** De 33:27 Ps 29:11 68:35 Isa 45:24 Joe 3:16 2Co 12:9 Php 4:13
- **will not:** Nu 14:28,29 23:19 Ps 95:11 Eze 24:14 2Ti 2:13 Tit 1:2 Heb 6:18
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE GLORY OF ISRAEL'S IRREVOCABLE DECREE

Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind - NET =Preeminent One of Israel" **CSB** = Eternal One of Israel" **KJV** = Strength of Israel This Name for God, **Glory of Israel**, is used only here (albeit cf Micah 1:15+). Glory in general means to give a proper opinion of and in this context the proper opinion is that God does **not lie or change His mind**. This would be like a divine exclamation point on the rejection of Saul.

Ryrie on "**the Glory of Israel**" - A unique designation for God, emphasizing His eternal nature. The title is particularly appropriate in this context, which stresses His immutability."

for He is not a man that He should change His mind- God is not like men who change their mind. The judgment on Saul was

final.

Guzik - This reminds Saul that the Lord is determined in His purpose and is strong in His will. There will be no change.

NET NOTE on will not lie or change His mind - This observation marks the preceding statement (1Sa 15:28) as an unconditional, unalterable decree. When God makes such a decree he will not alter it or change his mind. This does not mean that God never deviates from his stated intentions or changes his mind. On the contrary, several passages describe him as changing his mind. In fact, his willingness to do so is one of his fundamental divine attributes (see Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). For a fuller discussion see **R. B. Chisholm, Jr., "Does God Change His Mind?" BSac 152 (1995): 387–99.**

Related Resource:

- [Immutability of God](#)
- [What is the immutability of God? | GotQuestions.org](#)

[Walter Kaiser - Hard Sayings of the Bible - scroll to page 181](#) - 1Sa 15:29 God Does Not Change His Mind?

Here in 1 Samuel 15 we have a clear statement about God's truthfulness and unchanging character. But elsewhere in the Old Testament we read of God repenting or changing his mind. Does God change his mind? If so, does that discredit his truthfulness or his unchanging character? If not, what do these other Old Testament texts mean?

It can be affirmed from the start that God's essence and character, his resolute determination to punish sin and to reward virtue, are unchanging (see Mal 3:6). These are absolute and unconditional affirmations that Scripture everywhere teaches. But this does not mean that all his promises and warnings are unconditional. Many turn on either an expressed or an implied condition.

The classic example of this conditional teaching is Jeremiah 18:7–10: "If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it."

This principle clearly states the condition underlying most of God's promises and threats, even when it is not made explicit, as in the case of Jonah. Therefore, whenever God does not fulfill a promise or execute a threat that he has made, the explanation is obvious: in all of these cases, the change has not come in God, but in the individual or nation.

Of course some of God's promises are unconditional for they rest solely on his mercy and grace. These would be: his covenant with the seasons after Noah's flood (Gen 8:22); his promise of salvation in the oft-repeated covenant to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David; his promise of the new covenant; and his promise of the new heaven and the new earth.

So what, then, was the nature of the change in God that 1 Samuel 15:11 refers to when he says, "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions"? If God is unchangeable, why did he "repent" or "grieve over" the fact that he had made Saul king?

God is not a frozen automaton who cannot respond to persons; he is a living person who can and does react to others as much, and more genuinely, than we do to each other. Thus the same word repent is used for two different concepts both in this passage and elsewhere in the Bible. One shows God's responsiveness to individuals and the other shows his steadfastness to himself and to his thoughts and designs.

Thus the text affirms that God changed his actions toward Saul in order to remain true to his own character or essence. Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, an evidence of indecisiveness. It is rather a change in his method of responding to another person based on some change in the other individual. The change, then, was in Saul. The problem was with Saul's partial obedience, his wayward heart and covetousness.

To assert that God is unchanging does not mean he cannot experience regret, grief and repentance. If unchangeableness meant transcendent detachment from people and events, God would pay an awful price for immutability. Instead, God enters into a relationship with mortal beings that demonstrates his willingness to respond to each person's action within the ethical sphere of their obedience to his will.

When our sin or repentance changes our relationship with God, his changing responses to us no more affect his essential happiness or blessedness than Christ's deity affected his ability to genuinely suffer on the cross for our sin.

See also comment on GENESIS 6:6; JONAH 4:1–2.

1 Samuel 15:30 Then he said, "I have sinned; but please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God."

BGT 1 Samuel 15:30 κα ε πεν Σαουλ μ ρτηκα λλ δ ξασον με δ ν πιον πρεσβυτ ρων Ισραηλ κα ν πιον λαο μου κα ν στρεψον μετ μο κα προσκυν σω τ κυρ θε σου

LXE 1 Samuel 15:30 And Saul said, I have sinned; yet honour me, I pray thee, before the elders of Israel, and before my people; and turn back with me, and I will worship the Lord thy God.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul again replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel. Go back with me so I may worship the LORD your God."

CSB 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul said, "I have sinned. Please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel. Come back with me so I can bow in worship to the LORD your God."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:30 Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the LORD your God."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:30 Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:30 Then Saul pleaded again, "I know I have sinned. But please, at least honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel by coming back with me so that I may worship the LORD your God."

NRS 1 Samuel 15:30 Then Saul said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:30 'I have sinned,' Saul said, 'but please still show me respect in front of my people's elders and in front of Israel, and come back with me, so that I can worship Yahweh your God.'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:30 But he answered: "I have sinned, yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel. Return with me that I may worship the LORD your God."

YLT 1 Samuel 15:30 And he saith, 'I have sinned; now, honour me, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn back with me; and I have bowed myself to Jehovah thy God.'

- **honour me now:** Hab 2:4 Joh 5:44 12:43
- that I may worship: Isa 29:13 Lu 18:9-14 2Ti 3:5
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

MINOR FACE-SAVING CONCESSION

This picturesque title is from [Paul Apple](#).

Then he said, "I have sinned" - This is the second time Saul confesses that he had **sinned**. It strikes me that even here he still does not say he had sinned against the Most High God!

but please honor ([kabad](#)) me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship ([shachah](#); Lxx = [proskuneo](#) - bow down) **the LORD your God**- What incredible [hubris](#) (Overbearing pride, presumption, arrogance)! Saul makes two requests (in Hebrew both are commands!), to be honored **before** men (he is still focused on the "god" of SELF!) and to **worship** Samuel's God (**the LORD your God.**) This designation of God (YOUR GOD) makes one wonder if this man was ever truly regenerate? One writer actually uses this passage to say that "despite his flaws, he was a sincere believer in God." To call Samuel's God "your God" hardly is evidence to support that he was a true believer (I am not saying he wasn't but this verse does not truly support that premise).

[Guzik](#) correctly points out that "Saul's desperate plea shows the depths of his pride. He is far more concerned with his image than his soul."

Matthew Poole - Here he plainly discovers his hypocrisy, and the true motive of this and his former confession; he was not solicitous for the favour of God, but for his honour and power with Israel.

THOUGHT - Are you (I) more concerned about what people think about you, then what God thinks about you (me)?

Honor (glorify) ([03513](#)) [kabad](#) is a verb which means to weigh heavily, to be heavy (weighty, burdensome), to be honored, to be wealthy, to get honor, to make dull, to make hard, to multiply or make numerous. There are 2 literal uses of **kabad** describing Eli as **heavy** (1Sa 4:18) and Absalom's hair as **heavy** (2Sa 14:26). Most of the uses of **kabad** are figurative and most of these figurative uses in turn convey the sense of **honor** or **glory** (e.g., a "weighty" person in society is one who is honored or worthy of respect ["respected" = Ge 24:19].)

Honor (Webster) - To revere; to show or regard with respect or esteem; to treat with deference and submission, To reverence; to manifest the highest veneration for, in words and actions; to entertain the most exalted thoughts of; to worship; to adore. to raise to distinction or notice; to elevate in rank or station; to exalt.

QUESTION - [Was King Saul saved?](#)

ANSWER - People have long puzzled over the question of whether or not [King Saul](#) was saved; that is, whether or not Saul was forgiven and justified by God and is in heaven today. It's not possible to give a definitive answer because, of course, Saul's salvation rests with God, not with us. We have no certain knowledge of the condition of Saul's heart. As Scripture says, only God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

The Bible does indicate that a person's spiritual transformation will be evidenced by his or her "fruit" (Matthew 7:16–20). If a person continually produces "bad fruit," then it is unlikely that he is a true believer.

Arguing against Saul's salvation is his record of jealousy, hatred, and murder.

Saul's rule as king was characterized by failure and rebellion. He directly disobeyed God (1 Samuel 15:1–35) and broke God's law by offering a sacrifice that only priests were to offer (1 Samuel 13:1–14). Saul was visited by evil spirits on several occasions (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9). Saul spent much time and energy trying to murder David (1 Samuel 18:10; 19:10; 23:14); he even tried to murder his son Jonathan once (1 Samuel 20:33). Incredibly, King Saul ordered the slaughter of eighty-five innocent priests and their families (1 Samuel 22:18–19). He consulted a witch and asked her to conjure Samuel up from the dead—another direct violation of God's Law (1 Samuel 28:1–20). Saul ended his life by committing suicide (1 Samuel 31:4).

There is the tendency to look at the above facts and say, "Saul didn't obey the Lord much at all, so that means he wasn't saved." But that is not quite fair, for there is more to the story.

Saul was God's choice to lead Israel (1 Samuel 9:15–16). Before Saul was made king, Samuel told him to visit some prophets (1 Samuel 10:5). At that time, Saul was told, "The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. . . . God is with you" (verses 6–7). The promise that Saul would be "changed into a different person" sounds very much like the born-again statements in the New Testament (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). This description, plus the statement in verse 9 that "God changed Saul's heart," leads some to believe that Saul was saved.

Just as Samuel had said, Saul was filled with the Spirit and prophesied with the other prophets (1 Samuel 10:10–13). The question remains *how* exactly Saul was changed. Was his new heart evidence that the Lord had forgiven his sin and saved him for eternity, or was the Lord simply overcoming Saul's reluctance to be king (see 1 Samuel 9:21)? The Bible does not say.

Those who believe that Saul was not saved point to the litany of abuses, missteps, and outrages that Saul committed, reasoning that no true follower of God could behave in such a way.

Those who believe that Saul was saved point to the fact that he was chosen by God and then used by God to prophesy and to defeat the Philistines. Saul made mistakes in his struggle against the flesh, but so do we all (Romans 7:21–23). Saul walked in the flesh for most of his life and therefore disobeyed the Lord. It doesn't make him unsaved. It just makes him a disobedient believer, some say, and the Lord disciplined His child in the way He saw fit.

In 1 Samuel 28:19, the spirit of Samuel tells Saul, "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me." These words indicate Saul's fate. Samuel definitely predicts the king's death. The question then becomes, do Samuel's words "**with me**" refer broadly to [Sheol](#), the place of the dead, or do they refer more specifically to the abode of the righteous? (**ED**: SEE Luke 16:19-33+) A case could be made either way, but the fact that Saul's son Jonathan was a righteous man argues for the idea that Saul joined Samuel in the abode of the righteous.

Saul's tragic choice to live according to the flesh caused him much sorrow. Saul started out so well, but his disobedience derailed

what could have been a stellar kingship and the beginning of a dynasty. By his sin, King Saul lost everything: his relationship with his son, his leadership role in Israel, the love of his people, and finally his life.

Again, it is not our place to judge another person's salvation. Only God truly knows whether or not Saul was saved. Did Saul begin his career with a humble, God-fearing heart? Yes. Did he commit egregious sins later in life? Yes. The matter of his salvation is between God and Saul. GotQuestions.org

1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:31 καὶ ἐστρέψεν Σαμουὴλ πρὸς τὸν Σαουλ καὶ προσεκύνησεν τῷ κυρίῳ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and he worshipped the Lord.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:31 Then Samuel went back, following Saul, and Saul bowed down to the LORD.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the LORD.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel went back with Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel finally agreed and went back with him, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:31 So Samuel turned back after Saul; and Saul worshiped the LORD.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:31 Samuel followed Saul back and Saul worshipped Yahweh.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:31 And so Samuel returned with him, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:31 And Samuel turneth back after Saul, and Saul boweth himself to Jehovah;

- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL RETURNS SAUL WORSHIPS

So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped ([shachah](#); Lxx = [proskuneo](#) - bow down) **the LORD** - Samuel returns with Saul, which is nothing short of amazing grace. The phrase **Saul worshiped the LORD** is fascinating. Was this genuine worship from his heart? Was his heart broken and contrite?

Why did Samuel go back in view of what he had said about Saul being rejected? We cannot be certain but one consideration is that the people may have rejected Saul as king if they thought he did not have Samuel's support.

[Guzik](#) - Did this do any good? It did no "good" in gaining the kingdom back for Saul. That was a decision God had made and it was final. But it may have done Saul good in moving his proud, stubborn heart closer to God for the sake of saving his soul. At least it had that opportunity, so Samuel allowed Saul to come with him and worship the Lord.

[Brian Bell](#) - **LESSONS FROM OUR LORD! Here's what we learn about our God:**

1. He is slow to anger! a) God's grace in giving Amalek so long a time in which to repent. b) He did not punish their sins the moment they transgressed. Ps103:8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. c) There came a time, however, when He decided to put an end to Amalek's predatory raids. The cry of the weak & defenseless in Judah had come before Him.
2. God is sovereign in His power & authority. a) By giving Israel victory over an enemy far more powerful than themselves He demonstrated the awesomeness of His might!
3. God is also steadfast in keeping His covenant with those who revere Him. a) Whenever Israel kept his covenant, He gave them victory over their enemies, & rewarded them far in excess of what they deserved.

1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, 'Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites.' And Agag came to him cheerfully. And

BGT 1 Samuel 15:32 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ προσαγ γετ μοι τ ν Αγαγ βασιλ α Αμαληκ κα προσ λθεν πρ ς α τ ν Αγαγ τρ μων κα ε πεν Αγαγ ε ο τως πικρ ς θ νατος

LXE 1 Samuel 15:32 And Samuel said, Bring me Agag the king of Amalec: and Agag came to him trembling; and Agag said Is death thus bitter?

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, "Bring me King Agag of the Amalekites." So Agag came to him trembling, thinking to himself, "Surely death is bitter!"

CSB 1 Samuel 15:32 Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of Amalek." Agag came to him trembling, for he thought, "Certainly the bitterness of death has come."

ESV 1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, "Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

NIV 1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites." Agag came to him confidently, thinking, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

NLT 1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, "Bring King Agag to me." Agag arrived full of hope, for he thought, "Surely the worst is over, and I have been spared!"

NRS 1 Samuel 15:32 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." And Agag came to him haltingly. Agag said, "Surely this is the bitterness of death."

NJB 1 Samuel 15:32 Samuel then said, 'Bring me Agag king of the Amalekites!' Agag came towards him unsteadily saying, 'Truly death is bitter!'

NAB 1 Samuel 15:32 Afterward Samuel commanded, "Bring Agag, king of Amalek, to me." Agag came to him struggling and saying, "So it is bitter death!"

YLT 1 Samuel 15:32 and Samuel saith, 'Bring ye nigh unto me Agag king of Amalek,' and Agag cometh unto him daintily, and Agag saith, 'Surely the bitterness of death hath turned aside.'

- **Agag said:** Jer 48:44 1Th 5:3 Rev 18:7
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

AGAG'S ASSUMPTION: "I'M OFF THE HOOK!"

To be off the hook is an idiom which means to allow someone who has been caught doing something wrong or illegal to go without being punished. Pardoned, vindicated, released; allowed or able to avoid blame, responsibility, obligation, or difficulty.

Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." - One has to wonder if this is one of the reasons Samuel returned with Saul, to compete the action which Saul had refused to carry out?

And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."- **The Living Bible** says "Agag arrived all full of smiles, for he thought "surely the worst is over and I have been spared." **ESV** = ""Surely the bitterness of death is past." Or as we hear people say "let's let **bygones be bygones!**" Agag assumes he is "**off the hook!**"

THOUGHT - What are the "CANAANITES" or the "AGAGS" in your life? God gave Israel a promised LAND, but He gives believers a promised LIFE in Christ Jesus, by His Spirit and [His Word](#). Are you living the abundant LIFE in Christ (Jn 10:10b)? If your answer "NO," could it be that you have refused to SLAY those SINS WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLE YOU? (Hebrews 12:1+) (Are you entangled?) We think if we just pray, they'll go away. Yes, pray, but then take up the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD (Eph 6:17+) and slay them, kill them, have no mercy on those sins that come like raiders in the night (THAT'S OFTEN WHEN THEY ATTACK ME!) to steal, kill and destroy your promise of abundant LIFE in Christ. By the supernatural power of God's Holy Spirit and with the sword of the Spirit, slay every "AGAG" (See comments 1 Samuel 15:3ff, 1Sa 15:32-33+) that incessantly seeks to reign as "king" (Ro 6:12+) on the throne of your heart (MEMORIZE Romans 8:13+ so you can put that "SWORD" into daily practice -- and you will need to be alert

daily, because these "KING AGAGS" are like cats with "9 lives"! Add the sharp sword of Colossians 3:5+ and use them daily!). Note very carefully the critical truth that killing the "Canaanites" and the "Agags" in your life is not "Let go, let God," but is more Biblically "Let God, let's go!" His part, your part. God's provision of power. Our practice utilizing His power. This is the Abundant Life Giving "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100)

[David Guzik](#) makes a great point about destroying the Canaanites in the Promised Land in his comment on Deuteronomy 7-

You shall conquer them and utterly destroy them (Canaanites or "Agags"): **Yet, God would not do it all for them.** The extent of the work would depend on their **faithful response to what God would do. Utterly destroy them ... nor show mercy to them:** This principle of battle until absolute victory is the key to victory as we take the Promised Land of blessing and peace God has for us in Jesus. We show no mercy to our enemies in the land, but we destroy them utterly. **Many of us, truth be told, simply do not want to completely destroy the sins which keep us from God's Promised Land of blessing and peace**—we want to weaken them, and have some control over them, but we do not want to utterly destroy them. Destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images: We are especially to destroy anything which would lead us into a false or foreign worship. This radical, complete destruction was important because of the depraved nature of the worship of the Canaanites, who worshipped male and female gods of sex (**ED COMMENT: THINK OF THE MODERN PARALLEL OF THE SCOURGE OF "FREE" [A LIE FROM THE PIT OF HELL - SIN IS NEVER "FREE" - SEE COST IN Ro 6:23+, James 1:13-15+] INTERNET PORN AMONG CHRISTIAN MEN AND WHICH SLOWLY GROWS LIKE [KUDZU](#) KILLING THE SPIRITUAL VITALITY OF GOD'S SOLDIERS, LEAVING THEM WOUNDED AND INEFFECTIVE IN THE SPIRITUAL WAR!**) and who practiced human sacrifice with their own children.

1 Samuel 15:33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:33 κα ε πεν Σαμουηλ πρ ς Αγαγ καθ τι τ κνωσεν γυνα κας ομφα α σου ο τως τεκνωθ εται κ γυναικ ν μ τηρ σου κα σφαξεν Σαμουηλ τ ν Αγαγ ν πιον κυρ ου ν Γαλγαλ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:33 And Samuel said to Agag, As thy sword has bereaved women of their children, so shall thy mother be made childless among women: and Samuel slew Agag before the Lord in Galgal.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:33 Samuel said, "Just as your sword left women childless, so your mother will be the most bereaved among women!" Then Samuel hacked Agag to pieces there in Gilgal before the LORD.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:33 Samuel declared: As your sword has made women childless, so your mother will be childless among women. Then he hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:33 And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so will your mother be childless among women." And Samuel put Agag to death before the LORD at Gilgal.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has killed the sons of many mothers, now your mother will be childless." And Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so your mother shall be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:33 Samuel said: As your sword has left women childless, so will your mother be left childless among women! Samuel then butchered Agag before Yahweh at Gilgal.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:33 And Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." Then he cut Agag down before the LORD in Gilgal.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:33 And Samuel saith, 'As thy sword bereaved women -- so is thy mother bereaved above women;' and Samuel heweth Agag in pieces before Jehovah in Gilgal.

- **sword:** Ge 9:6 Ex 17:11 Nu 14:45 Jdg 1:7 Mt 7:2 Jas 2:13 Rev 16:6 18:6
- **Samuel:** It has been a matter of wonder to many, how Samuel could thus slay a captive prince, even in the presence of Saul, who from motives of clemency had spared him; but it should be remarked, that what Samuel did here, he did in his magisterial capacity; and that Agag had been a cruel tyrant, and therefore was cut off for his merciless cruelties.
- **hewed:** Nu 25:7,8 1Ki 18:40 Isa 34:6 Jer 48:10
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SAMUEL EXERCISES RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION

But - Term of contrast. Here is another strategic use of this "hinge word" which results in a dramatic reversal of Agag's presumed pardon and Samuel's righteous retribution.

Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal - Samuel points out that Agag is not some innocent victim, but to the contrary has murdered innocent victims! His punishment would fit the crime! Recall Samuel is an old man, advanced in years, and yet he is not too old or too weak to bring to completion the command of LORD to utterly destroy King Agag. As an aside, there was no record of Samuel worshiping with Saul, adding support to the premise, that his return with Saul was less about Saul and more about Agag!

Guzik on **before the LORD** - Notably, Samuel did it **before the Lord**. This was not **before** Saul, to show him how weak and proud he was. This was not **before** Israel, to show them how strong and tough Samuel was. This was **before the Lord**, in tough obedience to the Lord God. This scene must have been shockingly violent; the stomachs of those watching must have turned. Yet Samuel did it all **before the Lord**.

Bob Roe Here is a helpless man, probably in chains, whom Samuel chops up into little pieces while doing the will of God. That should give us some idea that our attitude toward the flesh should be **utterly ruthless** and **without mercy**.

1 Samuel 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:34 κα π λθεν Σαμουηλ ε ς Αρραθαμ κα Σαουλ ν βη ε ς τ ν ο κον α το ε ς Γαβαα

LXE 1 Samuel 15:34 And Samuel departed to Armathaim, and Saul went up to his house at Gabaa.

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

NET 1 Samuel 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:34 Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:34 Then Samuel left for Ramah, but Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:34 Then Samuel went home to Ramah, and Saul returned to his house at Gibeah of Saul.

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

NJB 1 Samuel 15:34 Samuel left for Ramah, and Saul went up home to Gibeah of Saul.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:34 Samuel departed for Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:34 And Samuel goeth to Ramath, and Saul hath gone unto his house -- to Gibeah of Saul.

- Gibeah: 1Sa 11:4
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

SIN SEPARATES - SAMUEL & SAUL

Then - This marks progression in the narrative.

Samuel went to Ramah - He returns to his home with one great task remaining to be completed and that is to anoint Saul's replacement, a better man than Saul.

but - This "hinge word" closes a door between Samuel and Saul. The name on the door is "SIN" because sin always separates! And don't miss the implications of this closed door! Samuel, the man of God, had the word of God from the LORD, which would have been invaluable to Saul in ruling Israel and fighting Israel's enemies, but now that door is closed and Saul is left to resort to his own mental machinations!

THOUGHT- Beloved, don't shut the door on the "Samuel's" in your life! Find a Samuel (or Samuelette) and listen to their wisdom from the Word and your life will be all the better for it! (cf 2Ti 2:2+, 2Ti 2:22b+)

Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul - Where he would finish up his reign as king, over roughly the next 20 years.

For all sad words of tongue or pen

The saddest are these: "It might have been!"

--John Greenleaf Whittier:

1 Samuel 15:35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

BGT 1 Samuel 15:35 κα ο προσ θετο Σαμουηλ τι δε ν τ ν Σαουλ ως μ ρας θαν του α το τι π νθει Σαμουηλ π Σαουλ κα κ ριος μετεμελθη τι βασιλευσεν τ ν Σαουλ π Ισραηλ

LXE 1 Samuel 15:35 And Samuel did not see Saul again till the day of his death, for Samuel mourned after Saul, and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

KJV 1 Samuel 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.

NET 1 Samuel 15:35 Until the day he died Samuel did not see Saul again. Samuel did, however, mourn for Saul, but the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

CSB 1 Samuel 15:35 Even to the day of his death, Samuel never again visited Saul. Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted He had made Saul king over Israel.

ESV 1 Samuel 15:35 And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

NIV 1 Samuel 15:35 Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.

NLT 1 Samuel 15:35 Samuel never went to meet with Saul again, but he mourned constantly for him. And the LORD was sorry he had ever made Saul king of Israel.

NRS 1 Samuel 15:35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

NJB 1 Samuel 15:35 Samuel did not see Saul again till his dying day. Samuel indeed mourned over Saul, but Yahweh regretted having made Saul king of Israel.

NAB 1 Samuel 15:35 Never again, as long as he lived, did Samuel see Saul. Yet he grieved over Saul, because the LORD regretted having made him king of Israel.

YLT 1 Samuel 15:35 And Samuel hath not added to see Saul till the day of his death, for Samuel mourned for Saul, and Jehovah repented that He had caused Saul to reign over Israel.

- **Samuel:** 1Sa 19:24
- **Samuel grieved:** 1Sa 15:11 16:1 Ps 119:136,158 Jer 9:1,2 Ro 9:2,3 Php 3:18
- **regretted:** 1Sa 15:11 Ge 6:6
- [1 Samuel 15 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

1 Samuel 19:22-24 Then he himself (SAUL) went to Ramah and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And someone said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 He proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the **Spirit of God came upon him** also, so that he

went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 He also stripped off his clothes, and **he too prophesied before Samuel** and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

SIN CAUSES SORROW TO SAMUEL & GOD

Another title might be "Saul Sans Samuel" - [Sans](#) is a preposition which means If someone or something is **sans** another thing, they lack the other thing. This passage could be summed up as Samuel's separation, sadness and sorrow over Saul!

The Lord's yoke never fits a stiff neck.

Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death - Saul reigned 40 years, but exactly when his fissure in their relation occurred is not certain. However clearly reigned much of his time without the input and counsel of the Word of God from the man of God, Samuel. Thus it should not surprise us to see foolish, godless, unwise behavior in the remaining days of Saul's reign. Note the time phrase **until the day of his death** which suggests he saw Saul again when he (Samuel) died. Ramah and Gibeah were less than ten miles apart, but they never saw each other again.

Adam Clarke - "But we read, 1Sa 19:22–24, that Saul went to see Samuel at Naioth, but this does not affect what is said here. From this time Samuel had no connection with Saul; he never more acknowledged him as king; he mourned and prayed for him."

For Samuel grieved ([abal](#)) over Saul - This is a tragic ending for this great man of God. The **Septuagint** translates grieved with the verb [pentheo](#) (from **pénthos** = mourning) means to mourn for, lament. **Pentheo** denotes loud mourning such as the lament for the dead or for a severe, painful loss. It is grief and sorrow caused by profound loss, especially death. Grieving over a personal hope (relationship) that *dies*.

One cannot study the interactions of Saul and Samuel without feeling a deep sense of pain and sorrow -- O, what could have been had Saul had a heart for the LORD! Will we see him in heaven? Is that why Samuel is grieving?

John Trapp on **Samuel grieved** - "For the hardness of his heart, and the hazard of his soul.

And the LORD regretted ([nacham](#); Lxx - [metamellomai](#)) that He had made Saul king over Israel - And while Samuel did have regret, we know that even then, he did not cease to pray for Saul (1Sa 12:23+) . **Regretted** is translated in the Lxx with [metamellomai](#) which means feel remorse or have regrets about something, in this case that He had chosen Saul as king!

One other effect we see here of sin is that sin causes sadness! Saul and Yahweh!

Bob Roe It is intriguing that both God and Samuel have deep emotional hurt over this situation. What does Saul have? Nothing. He just goes on being king.

Grieved ([056](#)) [abal](#) means to mourn, lament. It was used of mourning rites for the dead (interesting thought considering Samuel was mourning for Saul!).

Regretted (was sorry,) ([05162](#)) [naham/nacham](#) is a verb which means to be sorry, to pity, to console oneself, repent, regret, comfort, be comforted, to get revenge for oneself (Ge 27:42, Ezek 5:13). According to the TWOT **nacham** reflects the idea of "breathing deeply" and hence refers to the physical display of one's feelings, such as sorrow, or in this case compassion or comfort.

QUESTION - [Was King Saul saved?](#)

ANSWER - People have long puzzled over the question of whether or not [King Saul](#) was saved; that is, whether or not Saul was forgiven and justified by God and is in heaven today. It's not possible to give a definitive answer because, of course, Saul's salvation rests with God, not with us. We have no certain knowledge of the condition of Saul's heart. As Scripture says, only God sees the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

The Bible does indicate that a person's spiritual transformation will be evidenced by his or her "fruit" (Matthew 7:16–20). If a person continually produces "bad fruit," then it is unlikely that he is a true believer.

Arguing against Saul's salvation is his record of jealousy, hatred, and murder. Saul's rule as king was characterized by failure and rebellion. He directly disobeyed God (1 Samuel 15:1–35) and broke God's law by offering a sacrifice that only priests were to offer (1 Samuel 13:1–14). Saul was visited by evil spirits on several occasions (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10; 19:9). Saul spent much time and energy trying to murder David (1 Samuel 18:10; 19:10; 23:14); he even tried to murder his son Jonathan once (1 Samuel 20:33).

Incredibly, King Saul ordered the slaughter of eighty-five innocent priests and their families (1 Samuel 22:18–19). He consulted a witch and asked her to conjure Samuel up from the dead—another direct violation of God’s Law (1 Samuel 28:1–20). Saul ended his life by committing suicide (1 Samuel 31:4).

There is the tendency to look at the above facts and say, “Saul didn’t obey the Lord much at all, so that means he wasn’t saved.” But that is not quite fair, for there is more to the story.

Saul was God’s choice to lead Israel (1 Samuel 9:15–16). Before Saul was made king, Samuel told him to visit some prophets (1 Samuel 10:5). At that time, Saul was told, “The Spirit of the Lord will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. . . . God is with you” (verses 6–7). The promise that Saul would be “changed into a different person” sounds very much like the born-again statements in the New Testament (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). This description, plus the statement in verse 9 that “God changed Saul’s heart,” leads some to believe that Saul was saved.

Just as Samuel had said, Saul was filled with the Spirit and prophesied with the other prophets (1 Samuel 10:10–13). The question remains *how* exactly Saul was changed. Was his new heart evidence that the Lord had forgiven his sin and saved him for eternity, or was the Lord simply overcoming Saul’s reluctance to be king (see 1 Samuel 9:21)? The Bible does not say.

Those who believe that Saul was not saved point to the litany of abuses, missteps, and outrages that Saul committed, reasoning that no true follower of God could behave in such a way.

Those who believe that Saul was saved point to the fact that he was chosen by God and then used by God to prophesy and to defeat the Philistines. Saul made mistakes in his struggle against the flesh, but so do we all (Romans 7:21–23). Saul walked in the flesh for most of his life and therefore disobeyed the Lord. It doesn’t make him unsaved. It just makes him a disobedient believer, some say, and the Lord disciplined His child in the way He saw fit.

In 1 Samuel 28:19, the spirit of Samuel tells Saul, “Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me.” These words indicate Saul’s fate. Samuel definitely predicts the king’s death. The question then becomes, do Samuel’s words “with me” refer broadly to [Sheol](#), the place of the dead, or do they refer more specifically to the abode of the righteous? A case could be made either way, but the fact that Saul’s son Jonathan was a righteous man argues for the idea that Saul joined Samuel in the abode of the righteous.

Saul’s tragic choice to live according to the flesh caused him much sorrow. Saul started out so well, but his disobedience derailed what could have been a stellar kingship and the beginning of a dynasty. By his sin, King Saul lost everything: his relationship with his son, his leadership role in Israel, the love of his people, and finally his life.

Again, it is not our place to judge another person’s salvation. Only God truly knows whether or not Saul was saved. Did Saul begin his career with a humble, God-fearing heart? Yes. Did he commit egregious sins later in life? Yes. The matter of his salvation is between God and Saul. [GotQuestions.org](#)

The Public Enemy

I Samuel 15

John Kitto

There is hardly any nation which has not had some especial public enemy—generally a near neighbor, which it was held to be a peculiar duty of patriotism to hate and to destroy. We need not name instances. It were difficult to find exceptions; and the reading and observation of every one will supply examples. Such sentiments between nations have generally their origin in bitter wars and ancient wrongs. Israel had many ordinary enemies, but the one marked out in this distinctive manner as the public enemy, were the Amalekites. This people had some kinds of settlements in the Sinai peninsula, and in the country south of Palestine and west of Edom; and being a people of semi-nomad habits, they appear to have been in the habit of wandering with their flocks over the intervening countries. With this location they came much in contact with the Israelites, always hostilely, during the forty years’ wandering. They opposed the Israelites after they had crossed the Red Sea, on their march to Sinai. They opposed and repulsed them also when they advanced to enter the Promised Land on the south; and, besides these recorded instances, there was probably a long succession of aggravating petty contests between them during the long intervening period of wandering, respecting which we have no account. It is, therefore, not wonderful that, according to ancient usage, the people of Israel solemnly doomed the Amalekites to utter destruction, whenever they should be able to wreak upon them all the fierce wrath which fired their hearts. This was in fact the same doom upon a nation which we have formerly seen inflicted upon a town in the case of Jericho.

This doom, incurred by the Amalekites in presence of the miracles, and the manifest tokens of the Divine presence which attended Israel’s march of mystery through the wilderness, had been not only unprovoked assaults upon Israel in the time of their weakness,

but such acts of defiance of the Power by which they were seen to be protected, that the honor of his own great name, no less than his official guardianship of the chosen people, procured the Lord's sanction of this devotement. It had not yet been executed. The Amalekites still kept up their ancient hostility to the Israelites; they had not by repentance sought to avert the execution of the sentence which hung over their heads, but rather derided the impotent hatred which had so long left unexecuted the threatened doom. They had thus kept their sentence alive—had not suffered it to sleep by lapse of time. The silence of the Scripture, which is, from great conciseness, confined in all that relates to foreigners to great demonstrative results, conveys an aspect of harshness to the seeming revival of an old and forgotten quarrel, and the punishment of ancient crimes upon new generations. It is more than probable, and more natural, that the Amalekites themselves had never suffered this hostility to sleep, or their doom to be forgotten. That they were forward, on every occasion that offered, to join in any aggressive warfare against Israel, we know. It is also easily understood that they allowed little peace to the southern Israelites settled on their borders, or to those who travelled, or were out with the flocks. Observation upon the occasional meetings and intercourse of adverse races in the East, will also suggest with all but the absolute certainty of written fact, that an Amalekite and Israelite seldom met without aggravating altercations. It seems to us as if we heard the Amalekite launching forth into such language as this: "Five hundred years ago, ye doomed us to utter destruction. Yet here we are. We are still alive—still we flourish under this terrible doom. Where is the great God of whom ye boast? His arm, it seems, is too short to reach unto us. We have not done aught to turn His fierce wrath aside. We have not bent the knee to you or to Him. We have done nothing to mollify you; rather we hate you, as much now as of old, and are as ready now as then to root you up. Think ye to appall by your curses the strong men your arms cannot subdue. We do defy you and your idle doom. Do it, do it."

The time of long-suffering—in this case very long-suffering—had at length passed, and the time of accomplished doom was come. It might have been executed by famine or pestilence; but although the Israelites might have ascribed this form of judgment to the proper source, the neighboring nations would not, and therefore judgment of extermination was committed to the sword of Saul, who, as king, would at once be recognized as the authorized fulfiller of the ancient devotement.

Some years had passed during which Saul had distinguished himself in the field by a series of always successful operations against the hostile nations around, whom he taught to respect the power of Israel, though he did not bring them under subjection. It would appear that in all these proceedings he acted much as an independent sovereign, without the required indications of his dependence upon the Divine King of Israel.

One trial more was to be afforded him—one more test of his obedience, before the sentence of exclusion from his dynasty was finally pronounced. He was commanded, through Samuel, to march against the Amalekites, and execute to the letter the ancient doom of devotement—of utter extermination—against them and theirs. If he had power to execute it—and power was given to him—whatever was spared became, according to the tenor of the old vow, as much "an accursed thing," as in the days of Jericho. Saul undertook the task: but he executed it entirely according to his own judgment of what was expedient and proper. He felt no objection as to any cruelty in the command, for he executed it fiercely upon all the people of the Amalekites who came within the scope of his expedition. He destroyed them utterly with the edge of the sword. But the king Agag, who fell into his hands, he spared—being the very person most obnoxious to destruction, as being, officially at least, the chief offender; and this assuredly not from any sentiment of pity, but for the vain-glory of possessing and displaying so illustrious a captive. So of the spoil: whatever was worthless or immovable was destroyed, but the best and choicest of everything, especially of the flocks and herds, was spared. In this conduct, however otherwise interpreted, Saul assumed to himself such large discretion in the execution of a positive commandment, and was so much in accordance with all his conduct—so manifested the fixed bias of his mind towards autocratic power, that his unfitness to become the founder of a line of theocratic kings could no longer be disputed, and his own doom was sealed.

The vain-glorious character of Saul was further evinced in his homeward march, by his setting up a monument of his exploit at Carmel—thus appropriating to himself all the honor of the success, a thing most offensive under the peculiar principles of the Hebrew government, and such as no other king ever ventured to do. Compare the spirit which this evinces with the constant and heartfelt dependence upon God, and the formal ascription of all honor and glory to Him, evinced in the Psalms and the history of David—a far greater conqueror than Saul.

Yet when Samuel came to join him at Gilgal, on his return, Saul had the confidence to meet him with the assurance that the task committed to him had been perfectly accomplished. "What meaneth then," asked Samuel, "this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Without awaiting the answer, the prophet, who saw through the whole transaction, and had received his commission before he set out, proceeded to denounce his conduct, reminding him that "when he was little in his own sight," he had by the Lord's free appointment been made heard over all the tribes, and anointed king over Israel. Yet he had become exalted in his own esteem, and in this and other instances had forgotten his fealty to Jehovah, and acted in disobedience to his express commands, But Saul persisted that he had obeyed, seeing that, as he now insinuated, the spoil had only been reserved for sacrifice to Jehovah, This we take to have been a gross attempt to bribe the Lord, under a most offensive misconception of his nature and character, to acquiesce in the exemption he had made. For, although stated as an original motive, it is palpably an afterthought suggested by the stringency of Samuel's rebuke. This is proved out of Saul's own mouth; when the prophet met this

subterfuge by the indignant and noble rebuke: "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;" the king shifted his ground, and urged that the army would not consent to the destruction of the spoil—that is, would not forego the beneficial interest they had in the distribution of it, which is quite different from the reason previously given. But, had it been a truth, it would, on the view taken by Samuel, have been no extenuation of the offence. The prophet then pronounced the irrevocable sentence: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." This brought Saul down from his high tone. He confessed that he had sinned, and without remonstrating against the sentence passed upon him—the justice of which his conscience probably admitted for the moment—he implored Samuel not to suffer the fact of their disagreement to appear, but to turn and take part with him in a public act of solemn worship. Samuel refused, and when the king took hold of his mantle to detain him, and it rent in his hand, the prophet, with great readiness, turned the incident into an illustration of his doom: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine that is better than thou." Satisfied, however, that he had discharged the painful duty committed to him—for it was painful, as he had much personal feeling in favor of Saul—he did turn, and worshipped the Lord with him.

Samuel then felt that he had another stern duty to perform. When the Lord's sentence had passed, it was not for the future kings of Israel to think that they possessed a dispensing prerogative, and the neighboring princes had to learn that there was in Israel a Power higher than the throne, to which even the kings were accountable. This had been far from the thought of king Agag. Since the king had spared him, he thought there was nothing more to fear—the bitterness of death had passed with him. So he intimated, when he was brought before Samuel, who, as judge and commissioned prophet, took upon himself the stern and terrible duty of exacting the long-stored vengeance for Israel which the king had wilfully neglected. Samuel answered: "As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women." He was then forthwith stricken down and slain by the sword. The text would intimate that this was done by Samuel's own hand, and although it is rightly alleged that in Scripture men are often described as doing what they ordered to be done, it is not improbable—having due regard to the habits of the East and the notions of ancient times—that the common interpretation is the right one. Samuel might deem it an honor to execute with his own hand the full judgment which had been neglected by the man to whom the sword had been entrusted. If it be urged that this act is contrary to the idea of Samuel's character which his previous history has conveyed, the answer is, that mild natures like his are often, when thoroughly roused into high excitement, capable of stronger deeds than men of habitually harsher temper.

Samuel then repaired to his home, and he and Saul never met by agreement again. Saul was left alone from that time. His doom was FIXED; and he was left to work it out. Alas, for him!

A Remarkable [Colloquy](#)

1 SAMUEL 15:12–35

F B Meyer

Thy choice was earth! Thou didst attest
Twas fitter spirit should subserve
The flesh, than flesh refuse to nerve
Beneath the spirit's play! Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit! Glut
Thy sense upon the world! 'tis thine
For ever!—take it!

—R. B.

AN intimation of Saul's lapsed obedience was made in the secret ear of Samuel in the dead of night, when God came near to him and said, "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he hath turned back from following Me, and hath not performed my commandments."

God requires literal obedience, and when that fails the results are as though He had changed his purpose or repented, but this is in appearance only. As a matter of fact, God cannot repent or change his purpose. Man may frustrate the working out of his plan, but the Almighty Workman will achieve it by some other method.

The wind may be blowing steadily in the same direction, and as long as we yield to it, it will waft us to the desired haven; but it is always possible for us to reverse our course and go against it, and then our life is so powerfully affected that it would seem as though God had changed his purpose—the change being due to ourselves, because, whereas formerly we moved with his purpose,

now by disobedience or unbelief we are steadily resisting it.

Does God ever come to you at night, or when the world is quiet, and tell you his secrets? Happy are they whom God can trust with his own profound sorrow over the failure of his chosen servants, honouring them with his confidence, and appealing to them to watch with Him. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?"

The faithful soul of Samuel was deeply moved. We are told he was "angry"—a righteous indignation that one who had been appointed with such solemn sanctions, and had bidden fair to achieve such glorious deliverances for his people, had so seriously missed his mark. Those who are true to God cannot but feel indignant when his purposes are frustrated, and his grace outraged, and the door of usefulness which He had set wide in front of a chosen servant is shut and barred by some act of careless or wilful disobedience. Samuel's soul was not only deeply moved, but "he cried unto the Lord all night." Ah! how much we owe to the Divine Friend, and to human friends, who when they see deterioration at work within us, take no rest, and give God no rest. This is the most priceless service that one soul can afford another. There is hope so long as lover and friend bear up our case before God, and plead that rather they should be accursed than that we should perish. How many a son now leading a reckless and profligate life, in his still hours, or when his evil courses have cast him on a bed of sickness, and debarred him from the active pursuits of life, comforts himself with the thought that, in some lone cottage, his mother does not cease to pray for him, and he secretly hopes that her prayers may avail against the vehemence of the fiery passions by which his soul is driven.

Samuel travelled some fifteen miles to find Saul, following him from Carmel, where, as we have seen, he seems to have set up a monument which was either shaped in the form of a hand, or on which the figure of a hand was graved (R. V. margin) to Gilgal, the site of the ancient shrine, where, as one of the versions informs us, the King was engaged in offering sacrifices to Jehovah; and there this most remarkable colloquy took place.

SAUL.—It was commenced by the King, who, seeing the Prophet coming towards him, advanced to meet him with an unctuous phrase upon his lips, "Blessed be thou of the Lord," and, with great complacency in his demeanour, added, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Whether Saul was blinded and did not really know how far he had deteriorated, for it is certain that disobedience puts out our eyes, as Hubert did young Arthur's, blinding us to the enormity of our sin, or whether he desired to gloss over his failure, and to appear as a truly obedient son, so as to deceive the prophet, we cannot tell, but that "Blessed be thou of the Lord," from his lips, and at such a moment, has an ugly sound. It reminds one of certain persons who interlard their business talk with references to religion, so that they may put the unwary off their guard, and enable their user to take a mean advantage, under the appearance of a high code of morals. It is the sin of Judas who betrayed his Master with a kiss. Better the open foe than the secret assassin. Better a dozen times the arrow that flieth by day than the pestilence that walketh in darkness.

SAMUEL.—At that moment the sheep began to bleat, and the oxen to low. A breath of wind, laden with the unmistakable indication of the near presence of a great multitude of flocks and herds, was wafted to the Prophet's ear. It is an unfortunate occurrence when, just as a man is becoming loud in his protestations of goodness, some such untoward incident suddenly takes place, so that the lowing of the oxen and the bleating of the sheep belie his words. I remember once a professor of religion who desired to impress me with his entire sanctification, and deliverance from every kind of idol, giving unmistakable evidence, by the taint of tobacco on his breath, whilst he spoke, that he had been smoking a rather rank kind of tobacco. I had not said a single word about smoking. I have never felt it my business to denounce indulgences concerning which God may not convict men universally. It is our business, on matters not clearly forbidden, and concerning which Christian people are not agreed, to lay down general principles, and to leave our hearers to apply them for themselves. But when this man went out of his way to assert his entire deliverance, I naturally was more on the alert, and in the taint on his breath I detected the presence of the choice oxen and sheep which had been reserved. With sad irony the prophet said, "What meaneth then this bleating of sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of oxen which I hear?"

SAUL.—The King excused himself by laying emphasis on the word they—"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." Notice the subtle effort to conciliate the prophet by the emphasis laid upon the word thy—"thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." It was unroyal and contemptible to lay the blame upon the people, and it was an excuse which could not be allowed.

SAMUEL.—The royal backslider would probably have gone on speaking, but Samuel interrupted him, saying, "Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night." Then the faithful old prophet went back to the past. He reminded Saul how insignificant had been his origin, and how he had shrunk from undertaking the great responsibility of the station to which God had summoned him. He reminded him how he had been raised up to the throne, and how the Almighty King of Israel had delegated to him his authority, requiring that he should act as his designated vicegerent. He reminded him also that a distinct charge had been given him, and that the responsibility of determining his line of action had been transferred from himself, as the agent, to the Divine Being who had issued his mandate of destruction. In spite of all, Saul had allowed his greed to hurry him into an act of disobedience. He had flown upon the spoil as a hungry lion upon his prey, and had done evil in the sight of the Lord.

SAUL.—The King reiterated his poor excuse: "Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way that the Lord sent

me, and have brought Agag, the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the devoted things, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal." It was as though he had said, "You have judged me wrongfully. If you would wait for a little while, you would see the issue of my act of apparent disobedience." He may even have cajoled himself into thinking that he meant to sacrifice these spoils now that he had reached Gilgal; or he might have mentally resolved there and then that he would sacrifice them, and so relieve himself of the complicated position into which he found himself drifting.

SAMUEL.—In answer to this last remark, God's messenger uttered one of the greatest sentences in the earlier books of the Bible, a sentence which is the seed-germ of much to the same purpose in the Prophets, which in subsequent centuries was repeated in different forms, and to which our blessed Lord gave his assent—"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." Whatever Saul might be leading him to infer, as to his intention to offer the sacrifice, there could be no doubt that up to that moment, at least, he had disobeyed God's positive command; and, in point of fact, the whole attitude of his soul was towards disobedience and rebellion, which, in fact, were the assertion of his own will and way against God's.

Then, tearing the veil aside, the old man showed the enormity of the sin which had been committed, by saying: "Rebellion is equally vile as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and the teraphim." These sins were universally reprobated and held up to the contempt of good men, but in God's sight there was nothing to choose between them and the sin of which the King had been guilty. Then, facing the monarch, and looking at him with his searching eyes, the Prophet, in the majesty of his authority as God's representative, pronounced the final sentence of deposition, saying, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being King."

SAUL.—In a moment the King realised the brink of the precipice on which he stood; and with the cry not of a penitent, but of a fugitive from justice; not hating his sin, but dreading its result; eager at any cost to keep the crown on his brow and the empire in his hand; afraid of the consequences which might ensue if his leading men detected any break or coolness between himself and the Prophet—he cringed before Samuel, saying, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord."

There is a great difference in the accent with which men utter those words, "I have sinned." The prodigal said them with a faltering voice, not because he feared the consequences of sin, but that he saw its heinousness in the expression of his father's face, and the tears that stood in the beloved eyes. Saul, however, feared the consequences rather than the sin, and that he might avert the sentence he said, as though Samuel had the power of the keys to open and unloose, to pardon or to refuse forgiveness, "Pardon my sin."

SAMUEL.—The Prophet saw through the subterfuge. He knew that his penitence was not genuine, but that the King was deceiving him with his words, and he turned about to go away. Then Saul, in the extremity of his anguish, in fear that in losing him he might lose at once his best friend and the respect of the nation, seems to have sprung forward and seized the collar of Samuel's cloak, and as he did so with a strong, masterful grasp, as if to restrain and draw back to himself the retreating figure of the Prophet, it rent. When Samuel felt and heard the tear, he said, "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." And then, referring to Saul's effort to turn him back, as though he would reverse the sentence which he had pronounced, he said, "Remember that the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; his sentence is irrevocable. The word is gone out of his lips and cannot be called back. There is no opportunity of changing his mind though thou shalt seek it bitterly and with tears."

Even at that moment, had Saul thrown himself at God's feet and asked for pardon, he would have been accepted and forgiven. Even though as a monarch his kingdom might have passed from him, as a man he would have received pardon. But there are moments in our lives, irrevocable moments, when we take steps that cannot be retraced, when we assume positions from which we cannot retreat, when results are settled never to be reversed.

SAUL.—Again the King repeated the sentence, "I have sinned," but his real meaning was disclosed in the following words: "Yet honour me now before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship Jehovah thy God." His inner thought was still to stand well with the people, and he was prepared to make any confession of wrong-doing as a price of Samuel's apparent friendship.

Finally, Samuel stayed with him, that the elders might not become disaffected, and that the people generally might have no idea of the deposition of the King, lest the kingdom itself might totter to its fall before his successor was prepared to take his place. He stayed therefore. The two knelt side by side before God, but what a contrast! Here was darkest night; there, the brightness of the day. Here was the rejected; there, the chosen faithful servant. Here was one whose course from that moment was to be enwrapped in the dark clouds of moody tyranny and jealousy, until he died upon the field of Gilboa; there was one, the unsullied beauty of

whose character was to remain untarnished until his removal to that world where he would shine as the sun, in his heavenly Father's kingdom.

Lastly, the old man summoned Agag, the King of the Amalekites, to his presence, and Agag came to him "cheerfully," hoping without doubt that he would be spared; and saying, as he advanced, "Surely the bitterness of death is past—there is no reason for me to fear it." Then Samuel, strengthened with some paroxysm of righteous indignation, seized a sword that lay within his reach, and hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord—emblem, this, of the holy zeal that will give no quarter to the flesh; and we are reminded of the words of the Apostle, "Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." To Amalek we must give no quarter.

May God help us to read deeply into this tragic story. Whensoever God our Father puts a supreme test into our lives, let us at any cost obey Him. Everything hinges upon absolute obedience. If you cannot obey, you cannot command. If you do not obey, you are not fit to be an instrument in God's hand. If the chisel is not true, the sculptor dare not hold it still in hand. Let us walk circumspectly and wisely, redeeming each opportunity, that God may make the most possible of us, and that, above all, we may not become castaways.