

1 Samuel 15 – Obedience Is Better Than Sacrifice

May 29, 2022

1. Saul's Obituary

When Saul had taken the kingship over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the Ammonites, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned he routed them. And he did valiantly and struck the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them. 1 Samuel 14:47–48 (ESV)

2. God's King must listen to God's Word.

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." 1 Samuel 15:1 (ESV)

- A. The Lord was the one who made Saul king.
- B. Saul had to submit to Samuel the prophet.
- C. The people over whom Saul reigned were the Lord's, not his own.

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. 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.'" 1 Samuel 15:2–3 (ESV)

"Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way when you were faint and weary, and cut off your tail, those who were lagging behind you, and he did not fear God. Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies around you, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget." Deuteronomy 25:17–19 (ESV)

So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. 1 Samuel 15:4–5 (ESV)

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. 1 Samuel 15:6 (ESV)

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

3. **Saul partially obeyed God's Word.**

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. 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. 1 Samuel 15:8–9 (ESV)

The word of the LORD came to Samuel: "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. 1 Samuel 15:10–11 (ESV)

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.
Genesis 6:5–6 (ESV)

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." 1 Samuel 15:12 (ESV)

4. **Samuel confronted Saul about his sin.**

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

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

A. Saul tried to blameshift his sin on his soldiers.

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." 1 Samuel 15:15 (ESV)

B. Saul tried to rationalize his sin to justify his sin.

C. Saul tried to minimize his sin by focusing on what he did right.

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

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. 1 Samuel 15:17 (ESV)

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.' 1 Samuel 15:18 (ESV)

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?” 1 Samuel 15:19 (ESV)

• Saul loved the stuff of life more than the God who gave him life.

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

D. Saul got angry and tried to argue his way out of sin.

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. 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.” 1 Samuel 15:20–21 (ESV)

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. 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.” 1 Samuel 15:22–23 (ESV)

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,... 1 John 2:3–4 (ESV)

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4 (ESV)

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV)

E. Saul responded to sin with worldly sorrow, not genuine repentance.

Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the LORD.” 1 Samuel 15:24–25 (ESV)

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."

1 Samuel 15:26 (ESV)

As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 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. 1 Samuel 15:27–28 (ESV)

And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." 1 Samuel 15:29 (ESV)

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."

1 Samuel 15:30 (ESV)

So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul bowed before the Lord.

1 Samuel 15:31 (ESV)

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." 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. Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeath of Saul. 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. 1 Samuel 15:32–35 (ESV)

Application

1. Obedience to the Word of God is extremely important to God.
2. Obeying God's Word is more important than worship.
3. What are sinful responses to sin?
 - A. Don't blame my sin on other people.
 - B. Don't try to rationalize my sin to justify my sin.
 - C. Don't minimize my sin.
 - D. Don't try to argue my way out of sin.
 - E. When I see my sin have genuine repentance, not worldly sorrow.

Life Group Questions

1. **Read 1 Samuel 15.** What stuck out to you in this week's study?
2. Was God's command to slaughter the Amalekites just? Why?
3. Like Saul, when do we think partial obedience to God's Word is good enough?
4. How has this study changed the way you feel about the importance of obeying God's moral law?
5. In the message, there were five sinful responses to sin. (Read them in the outline.) Which of them most readily manifests itself in your life? How has this study changed the way you will address that sin?
6. What do these verses teach us about God's wrath against sin in the future? **See Revelation 6:9-10, 19:15, Acts 10:42, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.**