

Part 1

Saul is given a command by God to muster the armies of Israel, hundreds of thousands of troops, and to go up against the Amalekite's, and to wipe them out, bringing God's judgment upon them. The prophet Samuel brings Saul this message from God to go and be obedient and to do this. And so Saul musters the armies of Israel and out he goes on the mission but he doesn't do it all – he only partially obeys. He does most of it but not all of it.

The orders were to destroy it all, cattle, sheep, EVERYTHING! But Saul decided to capture the king and keep the fattest cattle and save the best sheep. Saul didn't refuse to go kill the cattle. He didn't spare all the sheep. It wasn't that he rebelled against what God had said; he just didn't follow all of God's instructions! HE obeyed God only as far as it suited him!

In verse 9, it tells us that instead of wiping out all the sheep and cattle, and the king and all of the Amalekites, "... **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.** It didn't make sense to lose all those financial resources.

He kept all the "good" animals and all the "good" things, the good in quotes, and destroyed all the detestable things, the cheap stuff. Why didn't Saul kill him, the king of the Amalekites? He killed all the others. He only kept the cattle, the sheep, the oxen and the goods that were "good." Why did he not kill Agag? Californian Pastor Robert H. Roe suggests, Prestige! The oriental pagan despots always brought back kings as their prize trophy.

When Saul spared Agag and allowed the people to plunder the Amalekites, he committed essentially the same sin as Achan when he took spoils from Jericho. To appreciate this fact, we need to understand an important concept to the ancient Israelites — the cherem.

The Hebrew verb charam means "utterly destroy." The related noun, cherem, means "something that has been devoted to destruction, even consecrated for destruction by God." When God declared something to be cherem, he intended it to be totally destroyed. This concept underlies the stories of both Achan and Saul.

Joshua said that the entire city of Jericho was to be a cherem, devoted to destruction by God (Joshua 6:17). Joshua warned the Israelites quite specifically: "Keep yourselves from the accursed things [Hebrew: cherem], lest you become accursed [charam] when you take of the accursed things [cherem], and make the camp of Israel a curse [cherem]" (verse 18, NKJV).

Achan disobeyed, and consequently became doomed for destruction himself.

Like Achan, Saul was aware of God's clear command. He was told: "Go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy [charam] everything that belongs to them.

God is grieved because Saul had disobeyed him. And Samuel prays for Saul all night. The next morning, Samuel goes looking for Saul, and finds him at Carmel.

Saul has made a monument in his own honour and then gone down to Gilgal to have a celebration party.

When Samuel finally reaches him, Saul runs up to him, in the middle of all the celebrations, as all the troops are feasting on the lambs and calves they weren't supposed to have... Saul comes up to Samuel and says, like an excited child (verse 13):

Version 1

The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions.

MOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO.....
Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa.....

Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

Feeble excuse number 1 Version 2

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.

Saul was a liar, and he attempts to place the blame on somebody else! HE was the leader, he was the one in charge, HE was the one God had told what to do. It was Saul who made the decisions and he just didn't go all the way with God, and he had no guilt about it. He professed to have fulfilled the divine command, and that the blame for any defects in the execution lay with the people. It's not my fault – they did it.

Repeat of Feeble excuse number 1

I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. 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.

Plunder! There wasn't supposed to be any plunder!

Saul persisted in declaring that he had obeyed, he had defeated the Amalekites and yet slips up saying I brought back, in complete disobedience, Agag the Amalekite king.

In an attempt to divert the attention back to his men he alleges that the animals, whose bleating was heard, had been reserved by them for a liberal sacrifice of thanksgiving to God.

It was a flimsy pretext--a gross deception, an attempt to conceal the selfishness of the original motive under a cloak of religious zeal and gratitude.

Samuel does not let Saul get away with it.

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. 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.

Feeble excuse number 2 Version 3

OK 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.

I was afraid! Saul never feared anybody – except possibly Goliath; he was always ready enough to do his own will — he was a despot.

Saul claimed he was more afraid of the people than he was of God. And that is absolutely outrageous! Imagine hearing God say one thing, and people say another thing, and deciding to listen to the people, because you fear them more! That's an outrageous way to live, but I suggest that many believers live that way today!

The fear of man being greater than the fear of God, and as for the fear of women !

In one minute he had made two excuses and both excuses could not have been true in fact both were lies. For this reason Spurgeon calls him an insincere man.

Achan and Saul committed the same sin — taking of the cherem. Unlike Achan, Saul did not immediately confess when confronted. Because Saul had rejected God's word concerning the cherem, God rejected him as king. You can almost hear the shekel drop as he recognises the judgement that he has been rejected as king.

His "forced" confession was not genuine. He made his application only to Samuel, wanting to gain his favour. He needs Samuel to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet. Thinking it would please Samuel, he says **I violated the LORD's command and your instructions**

Saul, confesses his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; and applies to Samuel for forgiveness (v. 25): **I beg you, forgive my sin** as if he could forgive sin rather than God.

I have heard MPs confess their scandalous sin, and their errors over the expenses scandal, even a few seem to ask for forgiveness from their constituents – but I do not know of one who has publicly asked God for forgiveness.

They think it enough to make their peace with men without taking care to make their peace with God.

Saul was only afraid lest the people should revolt from him, or at least despise him. Therefore he earnestly asks Samuel (v. 25) to assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory.

Samuel cannot forgive and rejects the invitation to join Saul's victory celebration, but Saul presses the point a second time and asks for somewhat less than forgiveness; **honour me before the elders of my people and before Israel**

Maybe God told Samuel to go with Saul not to do honour to him, but to prevent a mutiny among the people or more likely to execute justice on Agag.

Time passed by

Part 2

Saul never wanted other people to be more popular than him or to look better than him. And he has a big struggle with David. People start liking David more than him, he gets upset and his jealousy grows so that he tries to murder David six times. His jealousy and envy get to a point where he can't even think or see straight. In the middle of all this he really believes he's doing God's will.

Saul allowed his life to be eaten away with envy, and jealousy. He allowed his heart to be filled with anger against David. And it was all because of something the women were singing.

Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands. 1 Samuel 18:7

Saul heard it and it filled him with a spirit of jealousy.

Saul hated David and he persecuted him and pursued him and sought to kill him. On one occasion when David was fleeing from Saul, Saul went into a cave, probably for a little siesta. The sun would be hot. He lay down and covered himself with the robe he was wearing or possibly something like a blanket. And there in the cool of the cave, he was taking a nap. But what he didn't know was that all around the side of the cave David and his men were there armed with swords, spears, bows and arrows. Somebody whispered to David, 'here's your chance, God has given you this man's life, now, kill him!' David took up his sword and cut off a part of the robe at the bottom of Saul's long gown,

Reminiscent of the Agag incident when **Saul caught hold of the hem of Samuel's robe, and it tore.** And **28 Samuel said to him, The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours— to one better than you.**

And then David retired back into the cave, into the shadow. And he said, 'God forbid that I should put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed. '(1 Samuel 24:6).

There was a second opportunity when David could have killed Saul in 1 Samuel 26. David and Abishai went right up to Saul as he and his men slept and took his spear from the ground at his pillow, and they also took away Saul's water jug.

They went to the top of the hill and shouted down and told Saul that they could have killed him, and they had the evidence to prove that.

Saul said, I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly.

King Saul said, I have sinned, but went right on with his efforts to kill David.

He continued to seek David out so in the very next chapter we read,

1 David thought to himself, One of these days I shall be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand. 2 So David and the six hundred men with him left 4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. 1

Samuel 27

Conclusion

"I have sinned," said Saul twice (1 Samuel 15:24, 30) when Samuel rebuked him for disobedience. Possibly a political acknowledgement but certainly no repentance.

"I have sinned," said Saul again when David had spared his life though Saul was seeking to kill him. But he didn't mean it

We must mean what we say, and have actions give evidence. As John the baptist said there is a need to, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." Luke 3:8

From the sad story of Saul let's hear again the words of Samuel.

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. 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.

To obey is better than sacrifice,
Disobedience is on a par with divination and idolatry.

God delights MORE in obedience than he does in sacrifice.

We can sacrifice 99% of our income, and 6 days of every week to him, we can give up all our luxuries, and take communion 15 times a week. We can spend three hours in prayer every day and read through our Bible 12 times a year... But God will be more pleased with obedience.

God delights MORE in obedience than he does in sacrifice.

God is going to be happiest when we are simply obedient to him!

And finally what does Jesus say in John 15

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ... 14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

God requires, first of all, above everything else that we do what he says, obedience.

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