

## God's Command to Saul to Eliminate the Amalekites Informs Our Minds and Hearts About His Character and Purposes

### 1 Samuel 15:1-3

- God's command to Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites and all they possess is part of the story of Saul and his failure and rejection. It also forces us to make sure we have a biblical view about many elements of God's character and actions, such as his justice and mercy and fairness, sovereignty and purpose, desire for salvation and love for people, and goodness and righteousness. A biblical understanding of these things will help us properly understand and interpret Scripture, create a deeper appreciation for the gospel, and practically affect every area of our lives.
- I. In the overall narrative of chapters 12-15, God's command to Saul through Samuel will lead to Saul's culminating act of disobedience and God's definitive rejection of him as king.
- **Chp. 12** - God's mercy after Israel's sin in asking for a king, and his conditions (Simultaneous reality of blessing and "this is what you get."). **Chp. 13** - First failure - unlawful sacrifice when Samuel delays; not taking seriously the authority of God's word. **Chp. 14** - Foolish oath and the consequences; pride, vengeance, jealousy.
  - **Vs. 1** - **And Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel** (Samuel's presence and words here seem abrupt after chp. 14 and summary in 14:47-52. Purposefulness of the "end" of this "scene." Chps. 9-10. Drastic change. "look what you've done and where you've gotten to." Israel is God's people, not Saul's, and Saul is subject to Yahweh.); **now therefore listen to the words of the LORD** (These chapters are teaching us that Saul has placed himself above complete submission to the authority of God's word, so this is ominous. It's presented as a given that Saul will continue in his established patterns, aligning with the reality that in his sovereignty God has already chosen David [13:14]. Yet, I believe it's also fair to say that there's an element, compatible with God's sovereign purposes, of Saul being given an opportunity to obey.).
  - **Vs. 2** - **Thus says the LORD of hosts** (LORD of hosts" in Hebrew is "Yahweh Sabaoth." You may recognize that phrase from "A Mighty Fortress." It emphasizes God being the "God of armies," so therefore, he is almighty over Israel's army, Saul, and the Amalekites.), **'I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt** (This is referring to an event that is described in Ex. 17:8-16, not long after Israel has crossed the Red Sea, before they reach Sinai. The Amalekites attack Israel, and this is the battle in which Moses, with Aaron's and Hur's help, holds up his hands while Joshua and Israel defeat the Amalekites.).
  - **Vs. 3** - **Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have** (This carries the idea of, because of a people group's utter depravity as Israel's, and God's, enemies, every living thing is to be completely annihilated, and plundered items are to be devoted to the Lord. It occurs in other OT instances, most notably Jo. 6 and Jericho.). **Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey** (The rest of the chapter is about Saul's failure to completely obey God's command, as he spares the king, and the best sheep and cattle. God informs Samuel of this, and he finally and ultimately confronts Saul, and God definitively rejects him. Notably, in 1 Sa. 22:19, in his jealous and vengeful obsession and pursuit of David, he has this done to a city of Israelite priests!)." Next week - the details of Saul's disobedience to this command.
- II. God's command to Saul to devote the Amalekites to destruction is important for us to biblically comprehend, for it says much about his character and purposes, and how we interpret them in Scripture and life.
- A. It is crucial to comprehend the depth of the Amalekites' particular sinfulness.
- Here's what Moses says about the attack in Dt. 25:17-19; "Remember what Amalek did to you as you came out of Egypt, how he attacked when you were faint and weary, and cut off all who lagged behind you; and he did not fear God. Therefore, when the Lord has given you rest in the land you shall blot out the memory of Amalek. You shall not forget. Here, vs. 18 indicates they hadn't changed over the years. Samuel refers to the current generation as "sinners," and in vs. 33 announces Agag's war crimes as the basis for his execution.
- B. Then, we must have a biblical understanding of the destruction of peoples.
- All of the Canaanites that God commanded Israel to wipe out share in this same utter wickedness. Dt. 20:17-18 - You shall devote to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, that they may not teach you

to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God. And don't believe that God's choosing of Israel was because of its deserving.

C. This then leads to have a proper understanding of biblical truths regarding the reality of sinful humanity and God's character.

- The depravity of the people God commanded Israel to devote to destruction is not isolated to them. This pictures the natural human condition after the Fall.
- Ge. 6:5 - 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.
- Je. 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
- Ep. 2:1 - You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.
- Ro. 3:10-18 - As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."
- Ro. 8:7 - The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God. It cannot submit to God's law.
- Jn. 8:44 - You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.
- This is comprehensively true in spite of being created in God's image and the dignity that carries.
- Total depravity. Fairness. "Neutrality." What does this indicate about God's character? This is why the biblical doctrines of predestination and regeneration are both both necessary, and... biblical, for God has eternally decreed to rescue some from this state. Jn. 6:44 - No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up on the last day. Jn. 6:37 - All that the Father gives to me (Jn. 10:29, past tense) will come to me. Ro. 8:28-30. Ep. 1:4 - He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.
- In God's wisdom and mercy, in the new birth, he so changes our depraved will that it sees him as infinitely valuable and gladly comes to him. Jn. 1:12-13 - But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And those he leaves in their depravity will never stop hating him. God is sovereign. We are responsible. Ro. 10:13 - Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Jn. 3:18 - Whoever does not believe is condemned already.
- Passages like 2 Pt. 3:9 and 1 Ti. 2:4. Context. God's will of disposition. God's vengeance vs. Saul's. God perfectly records all. His justice is not arbitrary (Ro. 9:15-16 - "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.). Final justice. Is God loving to leave some in their depravity and judge them? Ro. 9:22-23 - What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory?

D. When we understand this, it elevates the magnitude of the gospel.

- Ep. 2:1-10 best captures this. Not neutral. Love. Mercy. Undeserving. Fairness would be destruction. The righteous One was devoted to destruction so guilty, deserving, evil ones can be shown mercy.

E. Then, we can apply these truths to our lives.

- Submit to the authority of God's Word, and then trust. It is never too late to submit to God's Word and repent, for the secret things belong to him. Evangelism. Prayer. All wrongs righted. The trust we can have in God's sovereign purposes is inextricably tied to what he has eternally done for us. Ro. 8:28-30. We who were evil have been changed. Overflowing gratitude and a responsive life of worship and treasuring Jesus because of his rescue of me.