
Becoming Christlike – Learning How from Old Testament Kings and Prophets

Session 18 – I Samuel 15

Introductory Comments

We want to know what God wants from us, how to be pleasing to Him in our lives.

He has given us this whole Word for a reason. We want to be right. We want to be thorough in our study of it. Remember in the movie, Top Gun Maverick, the fighter jets would strive for “missile lock” so they could fire a missile and hit the target precisely. We want to be clear and precise in our study of God’s Word.

If we seek and are hungry and humble God will reveal the depths of the meaning of His Word to us. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the holy spirit. As born-again believers we have the same holy spirit in us to teach and guide us.

Saul’s Sin

In the last 4 sessions we honed in on how and why Saul could possibly sin as he did after all that God had done for him in Chapter 10 upon his anointing as king of Israel.

In Search of Eden

We saw that after the fall of Adam and Eve, man became totally self-absorbed. Man’s behavior ever since the fall is mostly dictated by the void within and man’s futile attempts to fill that void with worldly solutions.

Two Paths to The End

We looked at two contrasting chapters in the Book of Revelation.

One chapter deals with the eventual destruction of Babylon which represents the “counterfeit paradise on earth” that the devil will succeed in putting into place after the rapture of the saints, when Christ gathers the church together to meet him in the air. We see strong movement toward that counterfeit paradise currently going on with the aggressive movement toward globalism.

The other chapter gives us amazingly beautiful and dazzling pictures of God’s new Jerusalem, the new paradise that will eventually be put in place after all the other end-times events take place. God will finally live among his people as he had intended from the beginning. There will be no light needed since the presence of God provides the light. There will be no tears, no lack of any kind in the paradise to come.

I Samuel Chapter 15 - Saul’s Second Sin of Disobedience

In this chapter we will observe a great deal more about Saul’s behavior in order to learn from it and what it means to us in our lives. We saw in Chapter 13 Samuel had told Saul that his kingdom will not continue but that consequence was not immediately visible. It appears that Saul continues as if nothing has happened. Significant spiritual events can happen without their consequences being immediately visible.

You or I may sin egregiously and wake up the next morning feeling like “hey the sun is still shining, I am fine”. We may go on for some time before we realize the consequences of our action or inaction.

We will begin with the summary statement in Chapter 14.

I Samuel 14:47, 48, 52

47 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. **48** And he did valiantly and struck the Amalekites and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

52 There was hard fighting against the Philistines all the days of Saul. And when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself.

Saul was successful militarily. God was blessing the children of Israel as Saul carried out what he was supposed to do. He was wise to bring in valiant men.

Now in Chapter 15 we will look at what he did, why he did things, and what the consequences were, but we will also consider what he *could have done* differently. There are phenomenal lessons in this chapter.

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**.”

Samuel continues to be obedient. God has given him more words to deliver to Saul which he faithfully delivers. Any time God gives you a commission or sends you on any assignment he will always give you what you need to carry it out.

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. **3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction^a all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel, and donkey.’”**

Here Samuel has delivered the Word of God to Saul CLEAR, CONCISE, directions to carry out.

4 So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. **5** And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. **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.

7 And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. **8** And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites **alive** and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. **9** But Saul and the people **spared Agag** and **the best** of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves^b and the lambs, and **all that was good**, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.

Here we see a number of red flags that are in direct contradiction to the Word of God that Samuel had delivered to Saul. Saul spared the Agag the king ALIVE. They kept the BEST of the spoil and did not carry out the instructions of the Lord.

What should Saul have had in his mind?

He was supposed to have written the words of the law into a book that he was to read daily.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20

18 “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, **he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law**, approved by^e the Levitical priests. **19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, 20** that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

He was supposed to have the Word with him at all times, READ it, DO it. Had he been doing this and had he had the Word in his mind it would have given him pause to OBEY the word that Samuel had just delivered to him...It might have interrupted his inclination to spare the king alive, and to hoard the best of the spoil.

He should and would have understood WHY God was telling him to destroy everything without exception.

Deuteronomy 25:19

17 “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, **18** 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. **19** 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.**

God did NOT FORGET what Amalek had done. Amalek had been cowardly attacking the weakest of the children of Israel from behind. Saul should have, could have, would have known this if he had had his head in the Word. The commandment of God from Samuel would have resonated in him, and he would have understood what he had to do and WHY! He did not specifically carry out his responsibility as king.

Deuteronomy 20:16

16 But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance, **you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17 but you shall devote them to complete destruction,^a the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded, 18** 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.

He should have understood about devoting defeated peoples to destruction. This had been a standing commandment of what was to be done to these peoples and why. Their abominable practices would influence the Children of Israel and cause them to sin against God.

He should have looked at his tassels that day, as we have seen the importance of the many reminders God gave the children of Israel to keep them on track.

Numbers 15:37

37 The Lord said to Moses, **38** “Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. **39** And it shall be a tassel for you **to look at** and **remember all the commandments** of the Lord, **to do them**, not to follow^e after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. **40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments and be holy to your God.** **41** I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God.”

There was tremendous clarity in what Samuel had commanded him to do. There was also a great deal of precedent in God’s word. He might have also remembered what happened to Aiken and his family as a result of keeping some of the spoil that was to have been devoted to destruction. He might have even read that record that day.

I Samuel 15:9

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

This is SO HUMAN. He partially carried out God’s Word and figured that was “good enough”. He uses his own reasoning to rationalize that “certainly God would want us to keep alive the best of the animals.”

10 The word of the Lord came to Samuel: **11** “I regret^c 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.

Remember Samuel had not wanted there to BE a king! He knew that God was to be their king and there were to be judges like himself to move among the people, keep them on track, settle any disputes etc. He has the same heart as God. So indeed Samuel was angry and ever so sad, crying to the Lord all night.

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.”

Here we see that total self absorption we have been looking at as a result of the fall. Dedication of Self, pride of Self, Self-sufficiency. Saul thinks so highly of himself that he sets up a monument to himself!

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.”

Is Saul this deluded? Is he rationalizing? Has he been able to justify himself to himself? Is he lying? All of that? Who knows, but it is SO HUMAN. Remember after he was named king, “the spirit of God rushed upon him and he was turned into another man, and he prophesied with the prophets.” Now he has resorted to total carnality and is no longer following spiritual inclination.

14 And Samuel said, “What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?”

Samuel sarcastically points out to Saul his blatant disobedience to what God had commanded. (dead sheep don’t bleat and dead oxen don’t lowe). The instructions of the Lord had been clear and concise. Saul had blatantly disobeyed.

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.”

Now Saul shifts the blame off of himself and onto the PEOPLE, yes that’s it, THEY did it! And for a good reason. See Samuel it was to sacrifice to the Lord. That is why they did it and I allowed it. It’s for God’s benefit that they did it. So we really did carry out the Word of the Lord.

Isn’t this human beings at their best, which is their worst. In terms of rationalization, justification, excusing their own behavior. Saying it was **good enough**. Saul saying **they** did it. It’s not really his fault.

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop!”

STOP!

Samuel probably shouted this at the top of his lungs! Enough! Stop Saul. Stop with the excuses, rationalizations, lying, shifting of blame. Samuel had had enough of all of it!

I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.”

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. **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.**’

Don’t you realize that you are the anointed king? You are no longer out chasing donkeys. Samuel reiterated to Saul what the Word of God had been. God sent you on this mission. Those were his words. Eliminate ALL.

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?**”

This is so instructive for all of humanity, all of history, all of us! No matter how the Word of God comes to us...in a teaching, on the lips of another believer, when reading the Word...we are to respond with obedience.

Why, Why, Why are we humans so often disobedient and rebellious? Why did you pounce on

the spoil? This of course reminds us of Aiken who disobeyed this same command in the book of Joshua. As mentioned already Saul should have known this record and what happened when Aiken hid some of the silver and gold items in his tent that should have been devoted to destruction. As a consequence all of Israel suffered. Aiken and his whole family were killed as a result to show the gravity of disobeying God and preventing this type of disobedience from spreading throughout the people.

Notice the phrase “evil in the sight of the Lord”. It may not have been evil in Saul’s sight or the sight of those around him, or even in the sight of us as we read. There is a big difference between God’s view downward vs. man’s view upward. If it is evil in the sight of the Lord it is EVIL. We are to seek God’s view downward via the Word.

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.

Here is Saul trying to make himself look good. Belittling the fact that he took Agag alive.

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.”

Shifting the blame, not taking responsibility. He was responsible to LEAD the people in DOING the will of God. We look at Saul and Saul is “everyman.”

People lie continually. It has become a normalized part of human behavior. Here is a book Michael read years ago when he first began his quest to really understand human behavior and the prevalence of dishonesty in our culture.

Book: The Truth About Lying, Why and How We All Do It and What to Do About It
by Gird Graham Scott

<https://www.iuniverse.com/BookStore/BookDetails/107850-The-Truth-About-Lying>

List some of the chapter headings:

The pervasiveness of lying.

Why do people lie?

The different types of lies.

The reasons for lying.

Justified lying.

Lying in public and professional life.

Everyday social lies.

Covering your real feelings and opinions.

Creating a better image or appearance.

Avoiding unpleasant or undesirable contacts.

On and on it goes...

Saul is a liar and shifts the blame to the people.

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.**

The purpose of sacrifices in the Law period was to direct people’s hearts and minds toward God so that they would be reminded to love, honor, and obey him.

To obey you need to listen. Saul did NOT LISTEN. He did NOT OBEY

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.”**

Look at the consequences here reiterating what had been told him in chapter 13.

24 Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words

He should have stopped right there! But he did not. He could not help himself and he went on instead.

because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

How pitiful is that? He is the king. He had no reason to fear the people! He was to lead the people.

Book: When People are Big and God is Small; Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man by Edward T. Welch

<https://www.ccef.org/book/when-people-are-big-and-god-small>

Being people pleasing is a huge issue!

25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may bow before the Lord.”

Saul is STILL interested in his image and maintaining his position and his power.

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.”**

Look at the consequences here! This same consequence of Chapter 13 is reiterated. The kingdom is being taken away from Saul.

Think again about the huge opportunity Saul had been given as God’s choice to be the first anointed king of Israel. He had a huge opportunity, but he disobeyed and here are the consequences.

We too have a huge opportunity right now in our lives to be obedient. We don’t want to be ashamed at Christ’s coming. We don’t want to have those regrets.

27 As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. **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. **29** And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret.”

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.**”

Saul’s SELF-interest is so ingrained in him. Now he wants Samuel to honor him before the elders and before Israel. He wants to LOOK GOOD.

Book: Dare to Drop the Pose: Ten Things Christians Think But Are Afraid to Say by Craig Groeschel

<https://www.craiggroeschel.com/books/dare-to-drop-the-pose>

This book deals with pastors, leaders, and believers faking it to look good rather than having their heads and hearts into the Word for true spiritual guidance from God.

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

32 Then Samuel said, “Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. ^dAgag said, “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” **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.

Here Samuel is showing Saul what obedience looks like and what he was supposed to have done.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. **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.

God had given Saul the opportunity of a lifetime. But Saul let his human inclinations rule over him. He did not carry out the responsibilities of a king that had been so clearly laid out. Therefore his mind and heart were not in the right place to carry out the Word of God given to him from the lips of Samuel, God’s prophet.

Here is a list of Saul’s failings:

- He didn’t take God’s Word seriously.
- He didn’t pay attention.
- He didn’t listen.
- He thought, well this is good enough.
- Well this is going to be good for us.
- He didn’t really get what God was after.
- He hadn’t read the Word.
- He didn’t really know God’s heart.
- He feared man over fearing God.
- He was interested in appearance.s
- He shifted the blame.
- He made excuses.
- He rationalized.
- He justified himself: it’s not my fault.
- He lied.

All these things are in just one chapter. We see all these things exhibited by human beings on a daily basis,

YET, It is possible to overcome all that and live a holy, godly, obedient life.

Saul was presented with a mission, a responsibility. As he was carrying it out he got tempted to keep some of the good-looking stuff.

At the moment of that temptation he could and should have interrupted that thought, wait, is there a choice here? Is there something else I could do? Wait...there's an option available...to obey the Word that Samuel gave me. I can make a choice between what my carnal, fleshly inclination is and what God said. I can choose to do the right thing.

We Have A Choice

They did not have holy spirit to help them like we do. Day by day and moment by moment we have choices. Each of us can be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We will always have the inclinations of our flesh. It behooves us to have the Word in our minds so that when we are presented with a temptation, we can ...PAUSE...and think, "What is the godly alternative that we know from the Word?"

OK by free will in appreciation of all God has done for me, I am going to choose to be obedient. Even if I don't feel like it. Even if there is some good that I think I may be sacrificing.

This is so huge in actually being pleasing to God.

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.**

God said to His son: "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus was obedient even unto death. We can be imitators of Christ and carry out Gods will.

Obedience is pleasing to God.