

# What's Your Excuse?

- I. INTRO: Obedience is hard. Sometimes it is difficult to understand, and challenging to grasp. And that's not unique to us.
  - A. There are so many times in the Bible when people didn't fully understand what God was doing or why they had to obey, but they did it anyway (faith → action)
    1. Noah and the Ark; Abraham; Moses; Joshua and Jericho; Mary
    2. Obedience is hard. Sometimes it is difficult to understand
  - B. In this chapter, we see some difficult calls to obedience related to the Amalekites
  - C. Sometimes you just don't want to obey. So what do we do?
- II. 1 Samuel 15
  - A. The Command to Destroy Amalek (1 Samuel 15:1-3)
    1. *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! 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. 3 Now go and completely destroy the entire Amalekite nation—men, women, children, babies, cattle, sheep, goats, camels, and donkeys."*
    2. The Amalekites' origins trace back to their ancestor, Amalek, Esau's grandson
    3. The Amalekites attacked Israel as they left Egypt, road-weary
    4. Moses commanded Joshua to lead Israel's forces into battle against Amalek while he ascended a hill overlooking the battlefield, holding the staff of God in his hand. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites prevailed, but when his hands grew tired and dropped, the Amalekites gained ground. Aaron and Hur eventually assisted by supporting Moses' hands until sunset. By God's intervention, Joshua overwhelmed the Amalekites in battle
    5. This was the first conflict of many between the two peoples. The hatred culminates in the Torah in a prophecy attributed to the pagan Prophet Balaam. He foretold that though Amalek was considered "first among the nations," it would perish forever (Numbers 24:20).
    6. The concept of devoting someone to destruction is rooted in Deuteronomy 20:16-18 where God told them to destroy certain groups of people to *"prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the Lord your God."*
      - a) One of God's purposes was to protect his people
    7. *Deuteronomy 25:19 explains that one day "[Israel] shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget."*
      - a) God wants this to happen to protect his people from the Amalekites // Ex: like you not wanting to have a convicted child rapist move in next door to you

8. So in this chapter God gives Saul a difficult command: utterly destroy the Amalekites, sparing none—men, women, children, livestock, and possessions.
    - a) Destroy every man, woman, and child? Even babies? Sheep?
  9. Obedience is hard... even with a terrible past.
  10. Sometimes you don't get it. Sometimes you don't understand.
  11. What will Saul do?
- B. Saul's Campaign Against Amalek (1 Samuel 15:4-9)
1. Saul led his troops into the territory of the Amalekites and engaged them in fierce combat, which they won, but Saul only partially obeyed.
  2. Saul spared the life of Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and chose to spare the best of the livestock.
  3. After the battle, Samuel received a revelation from the Lord concerning Saul's actions. The Lord was deeply displeased with Saul's disobedience and relayed this message to Samuel: *"I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from following Me and has not carried out My commands."*
  4. Even when we don't understand fully, God takes obedience seriously
- C. *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."*
1. I want you to notice as this story unfolds how quickly Saul goes from taking the credit to shifting the blame
- D. *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!**" 14 "Then what is all the bleating of sheep and goats and the lowing of cattle I hear?" Samuel demanded. [Saul is lying to himself, saying he obeyed. We do this too...]*

*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.**"*

*16 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! Listen to what the Lord told me last night!"*

*"What did he tell you?" Saul asked.*

*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. 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.' 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?"*

1. Samuel gives us some insight into part of Saul's problem: INSECURITY  
→ we will come back to this; and the SOLUTION: Remember your ID

E. 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. 21 Then my troops brought in the best of the sheep, goats, cattle, and plunder to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."*

1. Notice how he is still making excuses. He is still trying to justify that he knows better than Samuel, better than God, and that his way is the best

F. 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.*

*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."*

- a) Obedience > Sacrifice
  - b) Submission > Offerings
  - c) Rebellion = Witchcraft
  - d) Stubbornness = Idolatry (self!)
  - e) Reject the Lord = The Lord rejects you
2. God says, "Make disciples." We say, "I go to church every week...." (we choose Christian religion over obedience)
  3. God says, "Come spend time with me." We say, "I volunteer."
  4. We say, "It's not a big deal." God says, "Your rebellious spirit and refusal to obey is just as bad as witchcraft."
  5. We say, "It's not that I won't obey, I just have a few hang-ups." God says, "Your delayed obedience is self-worship. Your excuses show that you trust yourself more than me."

G. 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. 25 But now, please forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the Lord."* [Proverbs 29:25, "Fearing people is a dangerous trap, but trusting the Lord means safety.]

*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."*

*27 As Samuel turned to go, Saul tried to hold him back and tore the hem of his robe. 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. 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!"*

*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.**"*

1. Saul isn't repentant. He is doing damage control. Worldly sorrow...
  - a) Isn't that what we do when we get busted but aren't sorry?
2. He wants to save face.
  - a) It's like when you get in a huge fight with your spouse right before you walk into an event you both have to attend and you fake make up and walk around both acting like you aren't angry.
  - b) This is about Saul's reputation before the people/nothing else

*H. 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!" 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.*

*34 Samuel went home to Ramah, and Saul returned to his house at Gibeah of Saul. 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.*

1. Samuel may be old, but he can still throw it down apparently
2. This whole event didn't give Samuel joy; he is broken over Saul

III. Let's get to the heart of this. Why did Saul disobey? I think there are two issues here:

A. **PROBLEM:** Saul is insecure. He is afraid of people. He has an approval idolatry.

1. **Fear of People / Approval Idolatry:** involves an excessive concern about what others think of us. This fear can manifest in various ways, such as seeking validation, approval, or acceptance from others to the extent that it dictates our choices, actions, and decisions.
  - a) Saul did this in chapters 13, 14, and 15
  - b) **For YOU:** Social Media Validation, Workaholism for Recognition, Inability to Say No, Peer Pressure & Conformity, People-Pleasing, Abusive Relationships, Trying to EARN favor w/ God.
2. **Biblical Perspective:**
  - a) *Galatians 1:10 says, "Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ."*
3. **Solution:**
  - a) In the Gospel, God has already approved of us so we do not need to prove ourselves to anyone else
    - (1) Worship God & Find your ID and value in him alone

B. **PROBLEM:** Saul thinks he knows better than God.

1. **Pride:** The problem of thinking we know more than God is a recurring theme in Scripture. It involves humanity's tendency to prioritize our own understanding and desires over God's wisdom and explicit commands.

- a) **For YOU:** Rejecting Biblical Truth, Justifying Sinful Behavior, Pursuing Self-Defined Happiness, Seeking Self-Autonomy, Ignoring Consequences of Sin, Following Pop Culture, Pompous Intellectual Pride
    - 2. **Biblical Perspective:** Genesis 3 → Temptation from Serpent
      - a) Of course, Adam and Eve aren't omniscient, omnipresent, outside time, etc, so they can never truly know good and evil as God does, only a shadow. || Ex: Is the cross good or evil?
    - 3. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 15, Saul thinks he knows a better way to please both the people and God, but it's just a people-pleasing compromise that God says is equal to rebellion and idolatry. → God knows best.
    - 4. **Solution:** Humble yourself before the LORD.
      - a) Isaiah 55:8-9 (NIV):
        - "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."*
- IV. Which brings us back to our opening anecdote w/ the Amalekites. Why would God command that? It seems so nasty, so cruel, so heartless.
- A. When we read those stories, our default is to question to wonder why anyone would obey. We almost sympathize with Adam and Eve and Saul questioning if God truly does know what's best
  - B. Well, Saul didn't eliminate all the Amalekites. And a few hundred years later one of Agag's descendants, Haman, almost eliminated the entire Jewish race in Persia. You can read all about it in the book of Esther.
    - 1. Another Benjamite related to Saul's brother thwarted his plot. His name was Mordecai.
    - 2. Had the Amalekites been eliminated, they would have been protected them from all that pain years later
  - C. The point is this: God really does know best.
    - 1. You might not always understand. You might not always agree. You might throw a temper tantrum about it today, but he means to bring about GOOD for you.
    - 2. He and he alone truly knows what is good. We are just guessing at it
  - D. Think about your life and an area where you have been resistant to obedience
    - 1. What did God tell you to do that you are STILL - after weeks and weeks of listening to teaching on Saul - refusing to obey
    - 2. What's your hang up?
      - a) Is it people pleasing? Is it thinking you know better than God?
      - b) What is your excuse for disobedience?
      - c) We've been pushing on this for weeks now. It's time to act!