

Hacking Agag to Pieces

1st Samuel 15.3-16.1

How bad is sin? Sin is so bad it took God killing His own Son to pay the price of wrath that sin deserved! That is an abstract thought until we see the price of sin in terms we can relate to.

Our first portion of Scripture this evening is just one of those places where we make a connection with the great wrath God has for sin and the high price that furious wrath demands. Please open with me to Psalm 51.

When we see that wrath upon sin it sometimes makes us uncomfortable—and it should. And in that discomfort we should then respond in gratitude for the gracious gift of Christ's redeeming love, atoning death, and endless life. To more fully appreciate what we have in Christ--we need to step back and consider the character of our God. God is always just, right, and blameless in all He does. That is exactly what He has consistently revealed about Himself¹.

*Psalm 51:4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, **And blameless when You judge.** NKJV*

The Amalekites hated God, detested Israel, and seemed to delight in wicked and destructive acts. God's instructions to Saul, therefore, fulfilled the vow He swore to Moses. Saul was to wipe out the tribe forever. He and his armies were the instrument through which a righteous God would carry out His holy judgment on a sinister people.²

But sometimes when we first see Him execute judgment we pause and secretly wonder why He was so severe, don't we? Let me show you one such place is God's Word. It is 1st Samuel 15. Remember when we started our look at Saul the first king of Israel. I explained that God rejected him for disobeying a very clear command. Then I read the actual orders God gave him. Turn them again with me please.

*1 Samuel 15:3 Now go and attack Amalek, and **utterly destroy** all that they have, and **do not spare** them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.' " NKJV*

¹ See also Galatians 6.7; Romans 2.6; Genesis 18:25.

²John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Vanishing Conscience - Drawing the Line in a No-Fault, Guilt-Free World*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing) 1997.

Those verses show God's attitude about sin. God is a God of wrath against sin. Here we see what lies ahead for all who do not flee to the shadow of the cross. But, why would God ever say to do such a thing? If we just look at the verse all by itself, it seems harsh and out of place. But once we back up and see what else God has said about these people—it all becomes much clearer. Christ's death spared us the fury of God's wrath upon sin that we rightly deserved.

So one thing we know for sure and that is that this event happened, God ordered it, recorded it and wanted it to happen—and all that is because of an immutable truth God has revealed about Himself—God blameless in His Justice, God is not mocked! You see God here responding, after centuries of patience, against sin.

The truth from Exodus is that only God can give us victory. We need to believe that truth and by faith seek His intervention in the battles of life.

Exodus 17:11 So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. 13 So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

God wanted to utterly destroy this nation and its ferocious, plundering, merciless culture of murder and wickedness. The Amalekites were the 1st nation to attack Israel when they came out of Egypt. They struck the rear and murdered the weak and frail and old who brought up the end of the line. They did so with desire – they preyed upon the helpless and God exposed them for what they were³.

The critical lesson for us is that only the Spirit can defeat our flesh. We win daily battles with the temptations of our flesh by walking in the Spirit. When we go our own way we face Amalek (our flesh) and are defeated. As Paul said the defeat of our flesh comes only through the victory Christ already won for us on the cross, brought to us step by step as we walk believing that truth in the Spirit of God's power.

God's Word clearly warns us that we do not conquer our flesh by physical means—asceticism, religious activity, or human effort. It is only by the power of the cross worked out in our life by the Holy Spirit. There is a war always brewing between our flesh and the Spirit of God within us.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17).

Flesh can't defeat flesh. Resolves, promises, fighting and striving in our own power only leads to further defeats--it is only by yielding to the power of the cross

³ J. Vernon Magee, p. 268.

God commands them to destroy their enemies completely. As we are to also through Christ.

- **Amalek was their foe.** Deuteronomy 25:17-19 "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, 18 how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 "Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget. (NASB)
- **The flesh is our foe.** Colossians 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. (NASB)

The Amalekites make an apt illustration of the sin that remains in the believer's life. That sin—already utterly defeated—must be dealt with ruthlessly and hacked to pieces, or it will revive and continue to plunder and pillage our hearts and sap our spiritual strength. We cannot be merciful with Amalek or Agag, or they will turn and try to devour us. In fact, the remaining sin in us often becomes more fiercely determined after it has been overthrown by the gospel.⁴

Now as we turn past another 500 years of sacred history we come to Saul's time three thousand years ago. The continuing hatred of God and evil against His people needs to be dealt with. So that is why God wanted Saul to destroy the Amalekites.

1 Samuel 15:8-9 He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

He thought, what a shame to destroy everything! So he saved Agag, who was the ruler of the Amalekites. Saul had no right to spare him any more than he had the right to spare the humblest peasant among these people. This nation was wholly given to evil, and the king, above all others, should have been destroyed and judged at this time. Neither had Saul the right to save from destruction the best of the cattle. It would appear that he made his attack for the purpose of obtaining booty and spoil, and God had forbidden that. The Israelites were bringing judgment upon the Amalekites for Almighty God in this particular case.

Saul kept only the best – **of what God hated**. To God the Amalekites were toxic waste that had to be dealt with; they were emitting dangerous spiritual radiation that would contaminate all that came into contact with them. So when God gave them into Saul's

⁴John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Vanishing Conscience - Drawing the Line in a No-Fault, Guilt-Free World*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing) 1997.

hand he wasn't to even spare their livestock – every one and every thing was to be destroyed. But Saul and his men went through that which God hated and saved the best. They sorted the deadly contaminants and kept the prettiest. Just like in the recent Gulf War II when looters took the beautiful barrels from reactor sites in Iraq, ignoring the skull and cross bones painted in red on each one. Taking them home they used them to store drinking water – and within days were experiencing deadly radiation sickness.

1 Samuel 15:30-33 Then he said, "I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord your God." 31 So Samuel turned back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord. 32 Then Samuel said, "Bring Agag king of the Amalekites here to me." So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hacked Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal.

Agag came "delicately" unto Samuel because he knew he was in trouble. And Samuel killed Agag. Now that may be strong medicine for some folk today, but my friend, our God is a God of Judgment and He is going to judge wrong and evil. I am glad that God is going to judge. I don't know about you, but I thank God that no one is getting away with evil today. There may be those, even in high places, who think they are getting away with their sin, and dishonesty, and murder, and adultery, but they are not. God is going to judge them. No one is going to get away with sin, and we need to make that very clear today. So Samuel executed the judgment of God upon this vile, wicked ruler, Agag⁵.

Listen, this is the message I want to underline in your heart and mind. Any part of our old life that we spare will come back and slay us and rob us of God's blessing, fruitfulness, and rewards.

- Any part of our flesh (like Agag) that we spare will come back with a vengeance and slay us.
- Amalekites (the flesh) always come to strike us down when we are weakest – and then rob us of our crown.

The end of Saul was a catastrophe. He crashed against the rocks of his own disobedient life and sank into the dark waters of sin. He was a disgrace to himself by his ignominious death; to his family he failed to protect; to his country he betrayed and brought to defeat; and to his God he ignored and dishonored. What a colossal failure and a grim testimony of neglected warning signs that led to a shipwreck of a very promising life!

And all of that was because he was unwilling to hate sin and obey God by turning away from that which causes sin.

The battle is already won, the enemy defeated and we just need to believe that and act

⁵ All of this material on 1st Samuel quoted from McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

upon that truth! How do we do that more regularly?

This evening we are going to survey the war chapters of God's Word Romans 6, Ephesians 4-6, and Colossians 3—and there we find the tactics God left us to win. He has defeated our enemy, armed us with superior weapons, and offers to lead us into victory every time we follow Him!

Colossians 2:6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, NKJV

How did I get saved? By trusting, believing, clinging to the truth that Jesus Christ took my sins, and stood in my place and bore the punishment of God's wrath I deserved. The guiltless One took my guilt; the sinless One took my sin; the holy One took my wretchedness and on and on I could go.

But did I see Him there personally? No, it was by what? Yes, faith.

I believed the truth of God's Word and God changed me forever. Now look at Colossians 2:6 again--As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, NKJV

The same way we were saved is the same way we live the rest of our lives.

Was I saved because I completely understood the Gospel? No, I am still understanding more and shall until glory!

Was I saved because I felt that God saved me? No because sometimes I feel that He couldn't have because I am so unworthy and sinful—does that unsave me? NO.

So apply that faith that you and I have for the work of Christ on the cross in our place and apply it now to the rest of our walk. Join me in Romans 6.

*Romans 6:11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. NKJV*

*Romans 6:11 **In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. NIV***

*Romans 6:11 **Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. NASB*

Now, in simple faith that saved you repeat that to yourself. (Just like my old pastor John MacArthur always used to tell us 'preach the Gospel to yourself!') Say something like this:

Even if I do not feel it, understand it, or even at times want it I WILL by faith, believing YOU consider myself dead to sin. Or in times of need, "Lord I operate on what I know is

true, you have made me dead to sin.”

When I truly prayed, asking in simple faith for Christ to save me—whether I felt a strong emotional feeling or not, God began His work within me. I started changing from the inside out. The same is true with these imperatives.

God never commands me to do what He hasn't already given me the grace to accomplish by faith through His Spirit!

Now go through the same process the rest of the way through Romans 6—

- I will not let sin reign...
- I will not present my members...
- I now by faith present myself to You God...
- I present myself to You Lord as your slave...
- I ask You to enslave my members (my mind, my emotions, my desires, my body, what ones are out of control? If they are out of control they aren't under Christ's control...)