

Esau, Amalek, Agag and Saul

Why God was so hard on Saul?

The Power of Little Choices...

Hebrews 12

Four thousand years ago one man made a series of little choices.

He was rugged, handsome, hard working, honest, athletic, strong—and proud.

From the perspective of those who lived around him he was a great guy—but from the One who sees the heart, he was pitiful.

A spiritual scan would have revealed that he fed his flesh, gave in to his passions, and nursed his wounds until they festered into gangrenous abscesses that oozed bitterness. That bitterness infected his entire life and he ended up becoming an enemy of God.

Who was he? Esau, firstborn son of Isaac, grandson of God's friend Abraham, natural heir to all the promised blessings of the God of the Universe—and one who had everything that really matters in life, except the most important element.

Esau had everything but God, and what does it profit Jesus once asked, if someone gain the whole world and lose their own soul (Matthew 16:26).

How did the life of this man who seemed to have it all turn out?

Hebrews 12 gives us this tragic flight recording in God's black box of another crashed life, another burned and wasted life.

Please turn there with me, and join me as we prepare our hearts to know God better through His Word.

Let's read the entire chapter.

Hebrews 12, pray.

Look back with me closely at the heart of Esau opened for view in v, 15-17. God does a

biopsy and shows us the cancer growing, unseen and unchecked.

- Hebrews 12: 15-17 See to it that no one **misses the grace of God** and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is **sexually immoral**, or is **godless** like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. **He could bring about no change of mind**, though he sought the blessing with tears. NIV
- Hebrews 12: 15-17 looking carefully lest anyone **fall short of the grace of God**; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any **fornicator** or **profane** person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, **he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance**, though he sought it diligently with tears. NKJV
- Hebrews 12: 15-17 See to it that no one **comes short of the grace of God**; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; 16 that there be no **immoral** or **godless** person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, **he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance**, though he sought for it with tears. NASB

Now turn back those 4000 years and see Esau in Genesis 25: 24. As the firstborn son of Isaac, Esau began with every imaginable opportunity and blessing; he lived with every earthly success, he died surrounded by an abundance of everything but God in his life. Even though Esau was proud, even though he was profane, even though he was immoral as Hebrews explains—God allowed him to live, to have a large family, and many descendants. That is the goodness of God that waits.

But in Genesis 25: 34 God records that Esau “despised” his birthright. As the first born son of Isaac, all the rights of the family contained in the birthright were his. Esau was to be in contact with God, he was to be the priest of his family, he was to be the man who had a covenant from God—Esau was given the place of continuing a relationship with God like his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. But what did he do? He bartered that right, trading it for a momentary need. What Esau was really saying by this choice was, “I’d rather have a bowl of soup than have a relationship with God.”

Without the insight we get from Hebrews we would not know all that was going on inside of Esau’s heart. Esau not only was immoral, but he was godless. He had no ethics or faith, no scruples or reverence. He had no regard for the good, the truthful, and the divine. He was totally worldly, totally secular, and totally profane. Christians are to be vigilant that no persons such as Esau contaminate Christ’s Body. That is why the writer of Hebrews warns us to see to it ... that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau.

That reminds me of a song from a generation ago, written about Esau and those like him

warned by God here in Hebrews 12. God's Final Call (JWP)

- Some day you'll hear God's final call to you
To take His offer of salvation true
This could be it, my friend, if you but knew
God's final call, God's final call.
- How can you live another day in sin
Thinking some day with Christ you will begin?
O will you hear, above the world's loud din,
God's final call, God's final call?
- If you reject God's final call of grace,
You'll have no chance your footsteps to retrace
All hope will then be gone, and doom you'll face:
O hear His call! O hear His call!

Again I repeat—God is so patient. Esau was given every imaginable opportunity and blessing; he lived with every earthly success, he died surrounded by an abundance of everything but God in his life. Even though Esau was proud, even though he was profane, even though he was immoral—God allowed him to live, to have a large family, and many descendants. That is the goodness of God that waits.

In fact, godless and profane Esau's family line lived on to the time of Christ in unbroken generations. Esau had many famous descendants we see described in the Bible—**Edom** and **Amalek** as nations by the time of Moses, **Agag** in the time of Samuel and Saul, **Haman** in the time of Esther and Mordecai, and the most notable and famous of all Esau's descendants was the evil, godless, immoral, and murderous **King Herod the Great** in the time of Christ. All of those are descendants of Esau. And all of them reflected in increasingly visible ways the results of godless living.

Look with me at that first descendant that God wants us to know about. That grandson of Esau, who was the grandson of Abraham, fathered the nation we know from the Scriptures as the Amalekites.

Genesis 36: 12 Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. NKJV

So Esau's grandson was Amalek. Time continues to pass, and as we turn to Exodus 17:8-15 we are now looking at events that occurred 3500 years ago as over 500 years has passed from the birth of these nations¹. The Amalekites became a nomadic race that inhabited the southern part of Canaan and became perennial enemies of the Israelites. They were fearful warriors. Their intimidating presence was one of the reasons the Israelites disobeyed God and balked at entering the Promised Land at Kadesh-barnea (Num. 13:29). They viciously attacked Israel at Rephidim shortly after the Exodus. They ambushed Israel from behind, massacring the stragglers who were most weary (Deut.

¹ Abraham was born 2166 BC; Isaac was born 2066 BC; Esau & Jacob were born 2006 BC. Esau married at age 40 in 1966 BC and had a son and then grandson named Amalek. The Exodus was 1446 BC and the attack of Amalek was soon after in Exodus 17.8. From Esau's marriage to that cowardly attack was about 550 years (1966 BC to 1446 BC = 550 years).

25:18). It was a cowardly attack by the most powerful and savage tribe in the whole region.

The Amalekites hated God, detested Israel, and seemed to delight in wicked and destructive acts. So God supernaturally delivered Israel that day, and the Amalekites fled into hiding.

As we examine the famous battle when Aaron and Hur had to support Moses' arms (Exodus. 17:8–13)—and the unusual way as the Lord instructed Moses in the battle and the aftermath, we see that something big is going on here. *God only let Israel win when Moses' hands were raised* (a picture of prayer in 1st Timothy 2:8), and after the battle the Lord calls Himself Yahweh-Nissi and says He will fight Amalek from generation to generation.

The truth from Exodus is that only God can give us victory.

Exodus 17:8-10, 14-16 Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 And Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial, and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar, and named it The LORD is My Banner; 16 and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." (NASB)

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 were².

What is going on? Basically this. We are seeing how sin left unchecked, like deadly cancer grows and grows. In Genesis Esau despised the blessing. Esau was proud and self-sufficient, profane and immoral. In a spiritual sense, Esau represents the flesh. His

² J. Vernon Magee, p. 268.

grandson Amalek becomes a Biblical illustration of the flesh and the life long battle each of us will have with our flesh.

There are three conclusions we can draw from Exodus 17:

- 1. First, God is going to get rid of Amalek. In other words, God is going to get rid of the old nature.*
- 2. Secondly, the Lord will never compromise with the old nature. He will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.*
- 3. The third important item is that this constant conflict will go on as long as we live in this life. The flesh and the spirit will always war against each other. Only the Holy Spirit of God can give us victory. We need to recognize this fact³.*

The battle with Amalek was won by Moses with upraised hands. Joshua and the army could not win by physical means—they had to have God's intervention. If you read closely you can see that the real battle was waged on the mountaintop. Moses was fighting and winning as he sought the Lord through prayer. When Moses' hands dropped, the battle would turn against Israel. Without Moses and his upraised hands in prayer, Israel would have been defeated.

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

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

³ McGee, J. Vernon, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 2000, c1981.

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

One final truth we need to see is in Galatians.

*Galatians 2:20 "I **have been** crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who **loved me**, and **delivered Himself up for me**. NASB*

*Galatians 6:14 But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world **has been crucified** to me, and I to the world. NASB*

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

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