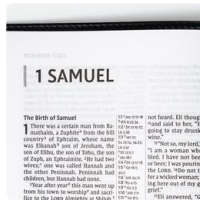


OpenTheo

1 Samuel 15



1 Samuel - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg reflects on 1 Samuel chapter 15, where King Saul disobeys God by sparing the Amalekites and their livestock. Gregg argues that while God knows everything, the future is still undetermined and unknowable, and that even with good intentions, disobedience to God is still wrong. He also notes that rebellion against God can be influenced by demonic powers. Ultimately, Gregg concludes that Saul's disobedience leads God to grieve, and ultimately allows for God to change His mind about Saul's kingship.

Transcript

We resume the story of Saul in 1 Samuel chapter 15, and here we see that he just keeps doing the wrong thing, and he always seems to have a religious motivation for what he does. At least he claims one, but he just is not getting it. He's not realizing that as the king, he's supposed to do exactly what he's told by the prophet of God.

And Samuel also said to Saul, This is one of those difficult cases. There are not many cases where God has Israel annihilate every last breathing vestige of a population. The only other cases really are those of the Canaanites, who were a nation under judgment, and now we have the Amalekites.

Now remember, this is not, in principle, it's not like the Muslim Jihad. The Muslim Jihad is basically you convert or you die. In this it's just you die.

Conversion is not offered, because they're under judgment. Now as it turned out, in the case of the Canaanites, it was possible for a Canaanite to convert, like Rahab. Rahab decided that she would go over on the side of Israel, and therefore the judgment that her people and she would have suffered was averted by her repenting.

But there was no promise of it. These people were not being converted by the edge of the sword. They were being eliminated because they were such a wicked people.

That God said every trace of their population has got to be removed from the face of the earth. Now these were the people who first attacked Israel when they came out of Egypt,

and they were just wandering in the desert looking for a place to stay, and looking for a place to find food and water, and you know, they're kind of vulnerable out there. And these raiding nomadic Amalekites decided to take advantage of them, and actually it says they laid an ambush for them, or laid in wait for them.

Actually we're told that the Amalekites had come up behind and picked off the weak and the slow among them as the procession of Israelites was going through the wilderness. The ones who were the slowest and the weakest were the ones that got picked off by the Amalekites. It's just a treacherous thing to do.

There was really not much for them to gain by it, just being nasty, just being mean and ornery and cruel, and that's apparently the kind of people they were. And God said, well, it's time for them to no longer be, and so you go and you wipe out every last bit of them. So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Teleum, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

Again, we have a difference between Israel on the one hand and Judah on the other for some reason. And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. Then Saul said to the Canaanites, go depart, get down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them.

For you showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Canaanites departed from among the Amalekites. The Canaanites remember were those that were related to Moses' father-in-law.

He was a Canaanite and they had been a people who kind of lived on the outskirts of other people's territory. And in fact, Jael was a Canaanite who and Sisera, who had attacked Israel and was now fleeing from Israel, thought of her as a neutral party. The Canaanites had been kind of neither joined with Israel nor joined with their enemies.

They kind of just were people who lived around there at peace with Israel, usually at peace with everybody. And we are told that they were at peace with the Syrians too. And so Sisera did not have any suspicion that she would kill him.

She obviously was more loyal to the Israelites than to his side. And so the Canaanites tended to be pro-Israeli, but not Jews themselves. So Saul said, well, there's some Canaanites living down there with the Amalekites.

Let's warn them to get out before we attack. So they did. And Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

That's a big territory all the way down to, you know, what we call the Sinai Peninsula, east of Egypt. He fought them off. The Amalekites were down in the southern region.

Of course, that's where they had attacked Israel before, was down in the Sinai Peninsula.

And so that was their general territory. They were not in Israel, but this is a case where God said there's an unsettled score here.

At the time that they had attacked Israel in the days of Moses, Moses had mobilized Israel under Joshua's command. It's the first thing we ever learned of Joshua doing and taking leadership of the army. And they fought the Amalekites.

That was the time when Moses' hands were in the air. And as long as his hands were in the air, Israel prevailed. And as long as his hands went down, Amalek prevailed, the Amalekites.

And at that time, they finished off the Amalekites in that region. But there were apparently different groups of them, or they had regrouped. Probably the Amalekites, many of them had scattered in that war and had survived by escaping.

And so at that time, God swore an oath that He would have war against the Amalekites perpetually and finally bring destruction upon them. And so that's what this was about. And so He took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

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. So this is like Achan keeping a golden wedge in a Babylonish garment out of Jericho. Everything was to be devoted to God by killing it.

But they just didn't bother to obey. Kept the king alive. Now why did he keep Agag alive? We're not told why he did that.

He does give a reason for keeping the animals alive later on. Whether that was his true reason or simply an excuse he made, we don't know. In any case, it wasn't accepted.

But he never mentions why he kept Agag alive. You might think, well, this is kind of a humanitarian thing to do. Well then, if he was such a humanitarian, how come he had no qualms about wiping out women and children and everybody else? Certainly Saul wasn't a humanitarian.

It may be that he had an idea of how royalty should be treated. There might have been sort of just unwritten rules that either existed or that he hoped to set a precedent for, that kings would be treated mercifully in war by their adversaries if captured. After all, he was a king.

For all he knew, he might be captured someday. If he sets a precedent by killing other kings that he conquers, then other kings would find no qualms about killing him if they conquered him. And so maybe he felt that establishing some kind of immunity of kings in war would work to his advantage someday.

We don't know. There's no record of why he kept Agag alive. But he kept not only Agag but a lot of other animals alive that were sacrificial, also edible.

But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed. Now the word of the Lord came to Samuel saying, I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments. This is the kind of statement in Scripture that provides some kind of encouragement to those who hold to what's called openness theology.

The openness view is that although God knows everything that is to know, yet the future is undetermined and yet unknowable. And they would say that God himself does not know what people will choose to do before they do it. This view offends many of a more orthodox viewpoint because it seems to impinge on God's omniscience.

To say that God doesn't know what people are going to do before they do it suggests that God doesn't know everything. But those who hold the openness view, and I'm not among them, but those who do hold it, counter quite reasonably that to say that God is omniscient simply means that he knows everything. But the future isn't a thing.

The future doesn't exist. There's nothing there to know. The future isn't something.

The future is non-existent until it comes. And therefore knowing the future, it's not incumbent on God to know the future in order to be said to know everything. Just like he doesn't know about purple zebras.

Why? Because there aren't any. They don't exist. So he can't know about them.

And the future does not exist. The future happens as it happens, they say. Now of course there's the Augustinian view that is more widely held.

God's just kind of in the eternal now and the future is as much visible to him as the past or the present is. That's a philosophical point. Certainly the Bible doesn't teach it.

But it is Augustinian and it could be true. Augustine is the one who introduced that idea that God's sort of in the eternal now. He lives outside of time as if time is a place that you can live outside of.

But the idea is he's in a realm called eternity, not time. And so he can see the future. Certainly the Bible tells us that God knows the future.

It doesn't say it in those terms, but it demonstrates it by his many predictions of the future and his ability to tell what's going to happen. But the openness people would say, well he knows what he's going to do and no one can stop him from doing it so he can predict with certainty what he's going to do. But he doesn't know with certainty what anyone else is going to do.

As when Samuel said to Saul, God would have established your kingdom forever if you hadn't been disobedient. But now he's got to find someone else. It makes it almost sound like God had one plan and then he found out, well that's not going to work out.

He's not going to have to go to plan B. They point to verses like that in Genesis where it says that when man became so evil on the earth that God had to bring the flood, it says God repented that he had made man. And here he says, it grieves me that I established Saul as king. He's turned away from me.

I regret it. So this is some of the data of Scripture that has to be taken into consideration. There are people who think that the Bible itself teaches that God doesn't know what people are going to do before they do it.

And it doesn't matter whether he does or not, they say, because he can still win. He can still make his purposes be fulfilled no matter what people do because he's smarter and stronger than all of them combined. So he can still bring about his purposes.

And therefore, his knowing what everyone is going to do is not a necessary part of his guaranteeing a certain outcome. That he can work together for good all things that are put on his table, though he may not know beforehand what everyone is going to bring up. I don't think there's a sufficient biblical case for this.

But I used to think it was much more heretical than I do now because I realize that there are Scriptures where God tells the future. There are Scriptures like this, where he sounds like he didn't know the future. I mean, you just have to take the whole Scripture and say there's some mystery about this.

I don't really know how God knows the future, but he does. But then why does he talk at times like this like he didn't? We who believe that God does know the future would say these are cases of anthropomorphisms where God is spoken of as if he was a person and he speaks as if he was a person. We know of such cases in the Bible that are undisputably that.

For example, when Adam and Eve had sinned and were hiding in the garden and God said, where are you, Adam? Like he didn't know. And Adam says, I'm here in the bushes. I was naked, so I hid.

And God says, who told you you were naked? As if God didn't know. I mean, he talks like he was ignorant, but certainly God knew. And later he talks to Cain and says, where's your brother Abel, Cain? And Cain says, I don't know, my brother's a keeper.

And then God says, I know where he is. I'm not ignorant of this, but he talks as if he is. He's interacting with a man as if he was a man with limited knowledge too.

When he says to Abraham in Genesis 18, I'm going down to Sodom and Gomorrah

because I've heard that their wickedness is really bad down there. And he says, and I'm going to go down and see if it's so, and if it is, I'll know. I mean, he talks that God says that.

Like he doesn't yet know if Sodom is really that bad. This is not a matter of God not knowing the future. It's not knowing what's happening right now, just a few miles away.

Obviously, God is in those cases talking as if he's ignorant of things that he isn't really ignorant of. This is anthropomorphic God in the form of a man, appearing as a form of man and relating with people as if he is a man. Remember how it says in Genesis 11 that when they were making the Tower of Babel, God said, let us go down and see this thing that they're building here.

Like, I can't quite see it from here. This huge tower they're building, you know, that's going to reach up into the sky. You know, they're going to knock us off our throne here.

I can't quite make it out. Can you? Let's go down there and see this thing that they're doing, he says, showing disdain for this bold project of man to have a tower that's top in the heavens. God can't even see it from where he's sitting.

He has to go down. But that's all anthropomorphic speech. And we just have to deal with it.

Sometimes it's indisputably so that God speaks as if he doesn't know or as if he can't see or as if he's relating to people as if he's got the limitations men have, but he really doesn't. So he says, I regret that I set up Saul as king. And yet it can hardly be that God didn't know what Saul was going to be like.

He knew Saul intimately before he ever set Saul up as king. He knew what the man's weaknesses were and so forth. He's turned from following me.

He's not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel and he cried out to the Lord all night. Samuel actually kind of had a heart for Saul.

Probably felt kind of responsible for him. Although God had directed Samuel to do what he did, yet Samuel had been the man who had installed Saul, who had encouraged Saul, who had given Saul his assignment. Therefore, he was very much involved and had an interest in Saul's success.

And it grieved Samuel to hear that God was really done with Saul. This in spite of the fact that Samuel was a little bit upset about Saul being made king anyway. But he still felt sorry for the guy, apparently.

So Samuel rose early in the morning. He had interceded all night for Saul. He apparently didn't sleep.

He cried out to the Lord all night. And when Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul went up to Carmel, and indeed he set up a monument for himself. And he has gone out on a round, he's gone on a round, passed by and gone down to Gilgal.

Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, Blessed are you of the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. But Samuel said, What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears, and the lowing of oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites. Notice, they, not I. They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared, the best of the sheep and the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Notice, in the obedient actions, it was us. In the disobedience, it was them. The people spared the sheep, but we killed the rest.

The killing is what we're supposed to do. I did that. I was involved in that.

But the part that was disobedient, I wasn't necessarily involved with that. That was people doing that, other than me. Now, of course, even if that was technically true, he couldn't be absolved of responsibility.

The people were acting under his command. If he didn't want them to spare them, he could have commanded them to kill them. So he's kind of shirking the responsibility here.

Then Samuel said to Saul, Be quiet, and I will tell you what the Lord said to me last night. And he said to him, Speak on. So Samuel said, When you were little in your own eyes, were you not the head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king over Israel? Now the Lord sent you on a mission and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.

Why then did you not obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil and do evil in the sight of the Lord? Now, he's actually accusing Saul of taking Agag and the sheep as spoil. Notice, in verse 15, Saul had said that the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to offer as a sacrifice to the Lord. But Samuel says, You just took spoil for yourselves, basically, is what you did.

And Saul said to Samuel, He protested the same thing, in verse 20, But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on a mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag, the king of Amalek. I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the plunder, sheep, and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.

Then 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 heed than

the fat of rams. That's more important to heed God than to offer fat of rams on the altar. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king. Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.

But 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. Now, Saul is really a good study in people's responses to guilt when they should simply repent. They do all kinds of other things to avoid repenting.

You know, repentance is really something that anyone can do anytime they humble themselves and decide to do it to admit they're wrong, but somehow people are resistant to that at times. I mean, Saul is confronted with his disobedience, and he could have said right from the beginning, I mean, you know, that was really wrong of me, I have really blown it, I'm sorry. Now, whether that would have gone well for him or not, we do not yet know.

But he didn't do that. The first thing he did when Samuel showed up, he said, I have fulfilled the commandment of the Lord. Notice, he denied that he had done anything wrong.

He didn't even acknowledge that anything had happened that wasn't what God said, which is probably the first impulse of people who say to conceal the fact that it happened. Basically to pretend like nothing has been done wrong at all. And then he was caught.

What's the sound of this livestock I hear then? And he said, well, the people, you know, they spared the best. And notice, it was someone else's doing, really. And he stuck with that story both times.

He said, it was the people who spared the best, the sheep and the oxen, in verse 15 and verse 20. And then he even admitted that it was his fault, but he said, I feared the people, in verse 24. I did it because I feared the people.

In other words, this was not really what I wanted to do. This is what other people did and wanted to do. I really, I mean, they outnumbered me.

I didn't want to displease them. They thought it would be a shame to waste all this good meat. And so the other people did it.

Or they influenced me. Or they intimidated me. There was disobedience here.

And I didn't do what I was supposed to do. But it was really not so much me, as it was other people and the way they pressured me. And that is, of course, another way that people respond, rather than just repenting.

They don't take responsibility. They say it's somebody else. You know, I was abused by my parents.

I was mocked by my PE coach. I was abandoned by the people who should have taken care of me. I've been stabbed in the back by friends.

I mean, my misbehavior, really, it's not my fault. There's other people involved. Or I was not really, you know, the ringleader of this band of criminals.

You know, that's what the group was doing. I was afraid to do something different. There's all kinds of ways we kind of make it sound like we're not really responsible for our disobedience.

And we can usually try to find some way to shift blame. That's what Adam did. He said, Lord, you caught me in the act.

I did eat that fruit. Yes, but it's the woman that you gave me. She ate and she gave it to me and so I did it.

Always trying to at least spread out the guilt, if not shift it entirely. You know, it wasn't just me. All of us did that.

You know, everybody does that. Everybody does this. I mean, this sin, it may be that the Bible forbids this, but everybody's doing that.

How could that be wrong for me? Or if it's wrong for me, it's not any more wrong than for everybody else. There's other people involved. There's other people responsible.

And that may be true. It may be entirely true that Saul was afraid of the people. And it was the people who objected to the idea of just slaughtering those animals instead of sacrificing or eating them.

That's true, but it's obviously irrelevant. Saul is responsible for his responsibility, not for other people's. If someone else disobeyed, then that would be between them and God.

But your obedience is between you and God. So blame shifting is not really going to cut it either. And then the other thing he did here is that he assigned a religious motive.

Well, we didn't do what God said to do. We did keep those animals alive, but we had it in mind to sacrifice to the Lord. You know, God should be glad about that because we now have something to sacrifice and we can worship Him now.

Of course, the Proverbs says the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. And Samuel said the Lord does not have as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in just obeying. To obey is better than to sacrifice.

Now, a lot of times people, when they have sinned and have been confronted about it, they find excuses based on their intentions were good. What I did was technically the wrong thing, but I had good intentions, worthy intentions. I wanted to actually glorify God with this.

I wanted to offer this as a sacrifice to the Lord. Or I actually had something good in mind as the outcome of this, something that would be approved by God, although the actions themselves might not be approved by God. The outcome I had in mind would be something that God would be pleased with.

So we often try to find some redeeming thing about the thing we did wrong and say, well, see, that was not really so bad after all because look at the good thing that came from it. Let's say a couple commits adultery. The woman gets pregnant and the child grows up to be an evangelist.

Does that mean their adultery wasn't bad? Just because God redeemed the situation? God got something out of it that worked out well? I mean, God can redeem any situation. That doesn't mean that those who are the players who did wrong things in the process are off the hood. So, you know, initially it's a cover-up.

I've done everything the Lord said. Then he got caught and he said, well, that was really the influence of other people who did that. That was somebody else.

That person seduced me. That person intimidated me. That person deceived me.

That's what Eve said about the serpent. The serpent deceived me. Well, that may be true, but it's irrelevant.

I mean, where's your responsibility in the thing? And then, of course, the thing that, well, technically what we did was forbidden, but the intentions and what we intended to accomplish with it was good. I'm sure that businessmen who compromise their integrity could use this argument. You know, I pay my tithes.

You know, the more I make, the more I can give to the church. And I can make a lot more money if I compromise a little on my honesty. If I falsify advertising or invoices or something like that.

If I fudge here and there and do things that are technically not really honest and true, but, you know, I intend to do good things with this prosperity. Actually, I made a pledge I'm going to give 15% to God of this transaction. I had to do a few shady things to get it to work, but God will get something out of it that makes it okay.

No, it doesn't. God is more concerned about obedience than about religious actions that may be done, in many cases, to cover up disobedience. So, one of their purposes for sacrifices was to atone for sin.

But that didn't mean that you could go out and sin so that you could offer a sacrifice to cover it. God would have you obey rather than offer the sacrifice because you disobeyed. Now, when he said, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry, why is it like witchcraft? Well, I think rebellion and witchcraft have something in common, and that is that they open people up to the devil's influence and control.

Even, I believe, demon possession is often the result of people being involved in witchcraft or occult things. It's one of the most common ways, in my opinion, that people become demonized, is by compromising the occult. But, you know, rebellion is not much different than that.

Rebellion, also against God, is the same kind of thing that opens the door to the enemy. And I think I've shown you before a scripture that gives me that impression. In Proverbs 17, verse 11, it says, "...an evil man seeks only rebellion.

Therefore, a cruel messenger..." The word messenger in Hebrew is the same word as angel. "...a cruel messenger, or a cruel angel, will be sent against him." Saul certainly found a cruel messenger was sent against him. "...an evil spirit from the Lord came against him, and he became demonized." Apparently.

How come? Because of his rebellion. He didn't actually get involved in witchcraft right away. Later in his life, he did.

And maybe that was just not too surprising. Once you've been involved in rebellion against God, there's not much of a difference between that and eventually going to the witch of Endor, and so forth, and being involved in witchcraft itself. Both of them are things that open a person up to the influence of evil spirits, so that Solomon, writing two generations after Saul, and very much aware of Saul's story, says that a wicked man seeks only rebellion, and therefore a cruel angel will be sent against him.

So it sounds like God will send, or maybe the devil will send, or both, a cruel angel against the person who's a rebel. And rebellion is thus, in that sense, like the sin of witchcraft. And of course, once you're in the rebellion realm, moving all the way into witchcraft is not a large step, as we see from Saul.

Here he's rebellious, later he's seen a witch. And in between time, an evil spirit is sent to him. He has opened himself up to demonic powers, as we shall see shortly.

Then Saul said to Samuel, I've sinned, verse 24, and I've transgressed. Now it sounds like he's coming clean. Of course, he says, I did it because I feared the people.

He's still leaving himself a bit of an excuse here. You know, I mean, these people, there's more of them than there is me. I was afraid I'd have a rebellion on my hands.

But I admit, what I did was wrong. It's the first time he's admitted that. I did sin.

So now, is everything going to be okay? Now why did he finally break down and say, I have sinned, when he was resisting that confession so long? Well, look what Samuel had just said. Because you've rejected the word of the Lord, God has rejected you from being king. Reluctant as Saul was at first, even to become king, he'd kind of gotten used to it.

He kind of liked it. He had decided being king wasn't all that bad. It's better than following cattle around on his father's ranch.

Better have people following him, supporting him, fighting under his command, doing his bidding. This kind of had grown on him, apparently. It didn't take long for him to say, this is a good life.

And now he's told that God's rejected him from being king. Oh, then suddenly he realized he's really got to get down to business. Oh, well, I've sinned.

Now I'll say I've sinned. But is this really repentance? Or is this a convenient retraction? Is this basically saying, oh, okay, if God's going to take everything away from me that I have and that I want, I'll do whatever He wants. What does He want me to do? What does He want me to say? Should I say I've sinned? Okay, I've sinned.

Of course I did it because I was intimidated by other people, but I'll say the words if that's the words you want to hear. Therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the Lord. Samuel said to Saul, no, I won't return with you, for you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.

Now, if Saul had been truly repentant, I don't know that Samuel or the Lord would have taken the same stand. But although Saul said, I have sinned, Samuel says, no, you have rejected the word of the Lord, as if that's still your current stance. You still have rejected the word of the Lord, and therefore, God has rejected you.

I can't support you. And as Samuel turned around to go away, verse 27, Saul seized the edge of his robe and it tore. So Samuel said to him, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you.

And also the strength of Israel, a term for God, will not lie or relent, for he is not a man that he should relent. Actually, in the Hebrew, it's the word repent. But the New King James translators are a bit squeamish about talking about God repenting.

And there are times when the Bible says God did repent, like in the story of Jonah, when

God saw that the Ninevites repented, it says He repented of the evil He said He was going to do to them. He didn't destroy them. Likewise in Jeremiah chapter 18, where God says, if I decree evil against any people or nation, if they turn from their evil ways, then I will repent, He says.

But the New King James says, I will relent. Sounds close to repent, as far as the English syllables go. And it probably has much the same meaning, but the truth is, God is saying, I will change my mind about this.

I will repent of it. And it says here, God is not going to change His mind about this. He's not a man that you can persuade Him.

In other words, Saul, you're trying to persuade me to change my mind. Even if you do, you can't change God's mind. He's the one who made this decision.

He's not a man like me, that might be persuaded to change His mind about this. God is standing firm on this. He's not going to repent of this.

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 Yahweh your God. Now Samuel did turn back after Saul, and Saul worshiped the Lord. Samuel was still somewhat sympathetic towards Saul, but he wasn't going to compromise.

But I guess he felt like Saul was considerably more broken at the end of all this. And said, you know, apparently Samuel decided to go with him and actually conduct a sacrifice, that's what worship means. Then Samuel said, bring Agag, the king of the Amalekites, here to me.

So Agag came to him cautiously. And Agag said, surely the bitterness of death is past. That is, Agag felt like, if they didn't kill me on the battlefield, I doubt that they'll kill me now when all the tempers are calm and all that kind of stuff, we're not in the heat of battle anymore.

He seemed to think that the risk of being killed was gone. But Samuel said to Agag, 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.

Now this is pretty bloodthirsty, but he made it very clear, the man had himself killed many other people. And he was due the death sentence for what he had done. Just like that time when it talks about the men of Israel had cut off that king's thumbs and big toes, we think, boy, is that barbarous.

And yet the king himself said, I have cut off the thumbs and big toes of 70 kings who gathered their food under my table. So we read about these harsh punishments coming on certain people, and we feel, oh man, can that really be justifiable? But most of the

time we don't know what the people did, although we have to assume they did something. In cases like this we realize that he's dying because he's killed many other people.

That's what he's dying for. Not just because he was born on the wrong side of the tracks or was a Gentile. Israel was not sent out to go and kill all the Gentiles.

And again, this is why it's not like a jihad. The jihad of Islam is to convert everybody or kill them. Now of course that's not what all Muslims represent it as, but that's agreeable with what Mohammed said.

And so this is not about all the non-Jews are supposed to be wiped out. There was no agenda of Israel to go and wipe out everyone who's not Jewish or who won't convert to Judaism. There were certain nations that had come under God's special judgment, which he used Israel as the agency of judgment upon, and the Amalekites were among them.

Then Samuel went to Ramah and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. What he did after that we don't know. The Amalekites had been killed off.

The Philistines had been driven out. What's the king to do now? Just go and sit around with his court, I guess, and be the king. How did he rule the people? We don't really know.

We don't know much about his administration. We only know about the mistakes he made. But he went back to Gibeah, his hometown, sometimes called Gibeah of Benjamin.

Here it's called Gibeah of Saul. Since he was the king, the town came to be known for his living there rather than just the tribe that it belonged to. And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death.

They never saw each other again, but they did see each other once after Samuel's death. But before that he didn't. Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul and the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

And the next chapter opens with God saying to Samuel, how long are you going to mourn for Saul? Let's get up and find a replacement for him. And so we have the rather charming story of David introduced in chapter 16. Something of a relief.

It's sad about Saul. And even David thought so. Even though David was persecuted by Saul and Saul wanted to kill him and hated him, David really was pretty loyal to him as the king.

I think David knew enough to know that the man was tormented by an evil spirit and when Saul was killed, David actually mourned his death and he didn't go out and do a

purge of his offspring. In fact, Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, was spared. He's the only surviving descendant of Saul that David knew of.

And David showed mercy to him. The good guys, Samuel and David, tended to be really sorry for Saul. And God was too.

God grieved over Saul. He grieved that he made him king. But God's not willing that any man should perish, that all should come to repentance.

It's just that Saul, when he was in a position where a wiser man would have repented, he used every ploy under the sun to substitute for repenting. Whether it's denying he'd done anything wrong, or trying to implicate others and shift the blame, or whether he was trying to justify it by the end justifies the means, you know, it's a bad thing I did, but the result was to worship God. That's a good thing.

Or whether he just actually made a confession, a manipulative confession, intended to help him, you know, get what he wanted. That is, to change God's mind and let him stay king. Saul was not a man who was humble enough to repent when he should, although he'd start out rather humble, one would think.

He certainly had the appearance of being a humble man at the beginning. The man certainly was not humble near the end.