

1 Samuel Chapter 15

1 Samuel 15:1 "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee [to be] king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD."

When and where he said to him what follows, it is not easy to determine, perhaps at Gilgal, where they had met again.

"The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel": That is, he gave him orders to anoint him king of Israel, otherwise Saul was in providence sent to Samuel to be anointed, and not Samuel to Saul.

"Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord": For so great a favor, and such high honor he had conferred on him, laid him under great obligation to obey the commands of the Lord. Whereas he had been deficient in one instance before, for which he had been reproved, he suggests, that now he should take care to observe and do, particularly and punctually, what should be entrusted him.

It seems as though Saul has rebelled so much at the exacting will of the LORD, that Samuel reminds Saul here that he is king, because the Lord made him king. Samuel tries to convince Saul, that the most important thing to do is obey the will and the Word of God. We are not to question the will of God. We must obey completely, not just the part we like. Listen carefully to the will of God and do exactly what He says, is the message of this first verse.

Verses 2-3: The command to "utterly destroy" the enemy was reserved for nations that rebelled against all things holy. This was God's most severe judgment, and it stopped the spread of pagan practices among God's chosen people (e.g., Deut. 20:16-17; Joshua 6:17, 21).

1 Samuel 15:2 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember [that] which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid [wait] for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt."

"Amalek": The Amalekites, a nomadic people of the desert and descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12), became a marked people when they attacked Israel in the wilderness after leaving Egypt (see notes on Exodus 17:8-16; compare Num. 24:20; Deut. 25:19; Judges 6:3-5).

The Amalekites had been a vicious group of people, opposed to the Israelites from the beginning of their journey to the Promised Land. They were desert people, who lived in tents. They were nomads. They had a bad reputation for stealing and marauding.

1 Samuel 15:3 "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

“Utterly destroy”: God gave Saul an opportunity to redeem himself with obedience. The judgment was to be a complete and total annihilation of anything that breathed. God’s judgment was severe on those who would destroy His people. It was equally severe to those who disobeyed (Achan in Joshua 7:10-26).

Total annihilation of the enemy is demanded here (see the note on Joshua 6:17).

This seems like such a cruel thing to do, but we must not question the intentions of God. He wanted to wipe out this evil, before it spread to His people (the Israelites). The reason He did not want any of the animals saved was simply that He did not want the Israelites to have war for personal gain. This was a holy war called for by the LORD Himself. This was a war for cleansing the land. He wanted to purge the land of even the memory of the Amalekites.

1 Samuel 15:4 "And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah."

“Telaim”: The precise location of this area is unknown, but it may be a reference to Telem (found in Joshua 15:24).

These Bedouins were probably more trouble to Judah, than to the others. Judah just had 10,000 footmen, and that would not be enough to destroy the Amalekites by themselves. The 200,000 footmen came from the other tribes. Telaim was a place where sheep were gathered. This meeting was not in town then.

1 Samuel 15:5 "And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley."

“A city of Amalek”: This was possibly modern-day Tel Masos located about 7 miles east southeast of Beer-sheba.

Ir-amalek was the only known city of the Amalekites. He did not go in and immediately destroy the village, as the LORD had told him to do. It seems that Saul was headstrong. He did not take instructions well, even if they were from the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:6 "And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites."

The “Kenites” are spared because of their protracted kindness toward “Israel” (see the note on Judges 1:16).

Moses’ father-in-law was a Kenite (Judges 1:16), a people friendly to the Israelites.

It is not apparent whether he gave them warning before the battle started, or whether it was during the battle. We just know he allowed the Kenites to go free. We also see that their kindness to the Israelites was the reason the Kenites were saved.

Verses 7-11: Against Samuel's instructions (15:3), Saul "spared Agag and the best" of the livestock and then kept the choice animals for himself. This selfishness, outright rebellion against God's law, and disregard for His holiness caused God to "regret" making Saul king. God did not say His decision was a mistake, He knew all long what Saul would do. Rather, God expressed grief over the sins of Saul and the effect they had on Israel (see note on 15:29).

1 Samuel 15:7 "And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah [until] thou comest to Shur, that [is] over against Egypt."

"From Havilah ... to Shur": Saul's victory was extensive, covering much of the Amalekite territory. However, the Amalekites were not completely destroyed (27:8; 30:1).

They were nomads, so they had to hunt them down to kill them. They were scattered from Havilah to Shur. They were scattered so much that they reached almost to Egypt.

Verses 8-9: Saul's actions were in clear violation of the divine sanctions against Amalek (see the note on 1 Chron. 10:13-14).

1 Samuel 15:8 "And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword."

"Agag": Another example of Saul's incomplete obedience, in the case of Agag, is recorded because it had such far-reaching implications. Over 5 centuries later an Agagite named Haman attempted to exterminate the Jewish race from his power base in Persia (Esther 3:1).

"All the people": The Israelites killed everyone they came across, except for the king.

The LORD told him to kill everyone. This was not keeping the commandments of the LORD to the fullest. Saul was a great earthly king, but we would have to question how he fared with the things of the Spirit. It seemed as if he could just not do exactly what God told him to do. He did most of what God told him to do, but he would not keep every detail. He was rebellious against God in this.

1 Samuel 15:9 "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all [that was] good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing [that was] vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

"Saul and the people spared": Motivated by covetousness, both Saul and the people greedily spared the choice spoil of the land, disobeying God's Word and demonstrating their faithlessness.

This is a direct disobedience of God. Saul killed only the animals that are second best, and kept the best for himself. This was not what the LORD had said to do. Saul had disobeyed the LORD, again. He had been partly obedient, but he had not been totally obedient. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

1 Samuel 15:10 "Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,"

The word of prophecy, as the Targum; this came to him in a dream or vision, or by an articulate voice: saying; as follows.

1 Samuel 15:11 "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul [to be] king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night."

“It grieved Samuel”: Samuel’s role as priest over the people gave him great concern over the poor performance of the king, who was like the kings of other nations (1 Sam. 6:19-20); i.e., self-centered, self-willed, and utterly disobedient to the things of God.

God’s regret is an expression drawn from human experience. Yet, the “Lord” was doubtless “grieved” because of Saul’s disobedience. However, such characteristics do not indicate weakness or changeability in the divine will (James 1:17; see the note on 15:29 below).

Samuel was the moral, or spiritual, leader of Israel at this time. The LORD had told Samuel specifically what Saul was to do in the destruction of the Amalekites. Saul listened, but undoubtedly did not take the details serious enough to carry through. Now the LORD is speaking through Samuel again. Saul had failed nearly every test the LORD had given him. Saul was headstrong. He felt there was always a better way to do things, than to obey the explicit will of the LORD. He had not performed the commandments the LORD had given him through Samuel. He had spared Agag alive. He also saved the very best of all of the animals. Samuel was so grieved when he heard this about Saul that he cried all night unto the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:12 "And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal."

“Carmel”: This is not Mt. Carmel of Elijah fame (1 Kings 18:20), but a Carmel located 7 miles south of Hebron.

“He set him up a place”: Saul, apparently taking credit for the victory, established a monument to himself (Absalom in 2 Sam. 18:18). This foolish act of contemptible pride was Saul’s expression of self-worship rather than true worship of God and another evidence of his spiritual weakness.

“Gilgal”: The site of Samuel’s first confrontation with Saul (13:7b-15), became the site of this pronouncement of judgment.

We see from this, Saul did not report back to Samuel. He probably knew that Samuel would be displeased with what he had done. Samuel expected him to come back to him, and report about the victory. He did not however. Saul returned to Gilgal, which is several days' journey from Samuel's home.

1 Samuel 15:13 "And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed [be] thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

“I have performed the commandment of the Lord”: Saul, either ignorantly or deceitfully, maintained that he did what was commanded (15:20).

If he kept the commandment, why did he not come and tell Samuel? Why did Samuel have to look for him? Saul had kept part of the commandments of the Lord. He really had kept the commandments that were pleasing unto him and did not keep those which displeased him. He is like many believers in Christ, who want the salvation of Jesus Christ, but do not want Him to be their Lord.

1 Samuel 15:14 "And Samuel said, What [meaneth] then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

For the orders were to destroy all living creatures belonging to the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:3), if therefore Saul had performed the commandment of the Lord, as he said he had, from whence were these sheep Samuel heard bleating?

"And the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Where do they come from? These questions he put to convict him of the falsehood he had delivered; the bleating and lowing of these creatures proved him a liar, and were witnesses of his breach of the divine command. One would think every bleating and lowing of these must alarm his conscience, unless dreadfully stupefied.

The LORD had told Saul to kill all of the animals. He had kept the choicest animals back. The sound of the animals is convicting Saul of this sin.

1 Samuel 15:15 "And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

“The people spared the best ... to sacrifice”: Saul began to place blame on others, making room for his own excuses just as he had done earlier (13:11-12). Then he tried to justify his sin by saying that the animals would be used to sacrifice to the God of Samuel. Saul's blatant disobedience at least pained his conscience so that he could not claim God as his God.

Once again “Saul,” the sinner, attempts to shift the blame to others (13:11-12), or plead extenuating circumstances (verses 20-21). The practices are as old as sin itself (Gen. 3:12-13).

It appears that if Saul were going to sacrifice these choice animals, he would have gone to Samuel, instead of Samuel looking him up. In my opinion, a sacrifice should actually be the

finest thing you have that belongs to you, not someone else's property. It really does not matter what he was going to do with them. He disobeyed God by taking them at all. Saul seems to have become extremely proud of his own opinion, even to overruling the will of God.

1 Samuel 15:16 "Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on."

Stop a little, do not be in haste to be gone, as he might seem to be, fearing a reproof, and that something would be said to him not very agreeable.

"And I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night": Since it was not anything from himself, but from the Lord he had to say, he might expect the rather to be heard, especially since it was what had lately been told him.

"And he said unto him, say on": He gave him leave, perhaps hoping he should hear something said in his praise, commending him for what he had done in destroying the nation of Amalek (see Luke 7:40).

Samuel had been in prayer all night for Saul. He had actually pleaded with God to forgive Saul. Now Samuel wants Saul to stay and hear what the LORD said about all of this. Saul stays and tells Samuel to go ahead and tell him.

1 Samuel 15:17 "And Samuel said, When thou [wast] little in thine own sight, [wast] thou not [made] the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?"

"Little in thine own sight": Saul's status before he became king was as a humble and lowly Benjamite (9:21).

We remember that Saul had been a shy man. He had not thought himself worthy of being king. He had hidden among the wagons from Samuel. He thought someone else was worthier to be king. That is one of the reasons God had chosen him to be king. God wanted someone who would obey His commandments. Saul is strong-willed as he was an impatient man. He did things that were pleasing in his own eyes and not in God's eyes. God anointed him king, because he was humble. His accomplishments have made Saul overly proud of himself.

1 Samuel 15:18 "And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed."

And therefore, he ought to have attended to the errand sent upon, and executed the orders given. In vain, therefore, was it to lay the blame on the people.

"And said, go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites": Those notorious sinners, who deserve no mercy at the hands of God or men; who had so highly offended the Lord, and had been so injurious to his people at their first coming out of Egypt. The orders were plain, not to be mistaken, and full and strong for the utter destruction of them without any exception, and therefore nothing could be pleaded in excuse for the violation of them.

"And fight against them until they be consumed": Entirely; they were not to be left until an end was made of them; or "until they had consumed them", by the people of Israel, or the soldiers with Saul.

The LORD had left no doubt exactly what he had wanted done with the Amalekites. The Amalekites were robbers and murderers. This destruction of them was to cleanse the land of sin.

1 Samuel 15:19 "Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?"

"Fly upon the spoil": Saul and the people greedily took the spoil like a bird of prey diving on its victim.

It appears that, the LORD believes that Saul took the goodly animals for a spoil. People who fight wars for personal gain, want the spoil. A holy war is to cleanse the land, not to take a spoil. God had not given permission for them to take a spoil.

Verses 20-21: I have obeyed the voice of the Lord": Instead of confessing his sin and repenting, Saul continued to justify himself.

1 Samuel 15:20 "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites."

These and the words which follow are simply a repetition of the king's former excuse for his act: but they show us what the state of Saul's mind was. He evidently disbelieved in the power of the Eternal as a heart reader. If he could justify himself before Samuel, that was all he cared for. He asserted his own integrity of purpose and his great zeal for the public sacrifice to God, knowing all the while that low earthly reasons had been the reason of his conduct. He reiterated the plea that what he had done was in accordance with the voice of the people, conscious all the while that the plea was false.

Saul had not listened intently to the instructions from the LORD before the battle, or he did not believe Samuel was speaking the will of the LORD. His disrespect for the message Samuel gave, was not disrespect for Samuel, but disrespect for God. Part of the statement above is true. He did destroy most of the Amalekites. Saul is like so many people. He tries to justify what he has done. He is like someone who is a Christian most of the time. That other time will keep a professing Christian out of heaven. The actions he takes, which are not 100% what God wants him to do, will cause displeasure from God as well. He will not do exactly what God says for him to do. It is as if he thinks he has a better plan than God's plan.

Verses 21-22: Saul claimed he had “performed” the Lord’s “commandment” until Samuel confronted him. Then he twice blamed “the people” for his disobedience. If he had acknowledged his sin immediately, perhaps his punishment would not have been so severe.

1 Samuel 15:21 "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal."

Still he continues to lay the blame on the people, when he, as king, ought to have restrained them.

"The chief of the things, which should have been utterly destroyed": This betrays him, and is evidence against him. He could not plead ignorance, he knew it and he owns it that according to the command of God they were all devoted to destruction. Therefore, he ought not to have suffered the people to have spared any on whatsoever presence, but to have seen all destroyed. But he was as deeply in it as they, and therefore moderates the thing, and endeavors to excuse them by observing, that their end was good, the service and glory of God, which perhaps were never thought of till now, namely:

"To sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal": As peace offerings, by way of thanksgiving for the victory obtained (1 Sam. 15:15).

These sheep and oxen that Saul has chosen out are the finest. They were fit for sacrifice, but God had said kill them. Perhaps, Saul's intentions were good, but he had not obeyed the LORD. We see from the following Scripture, that the things of the condemned city are cursed.

Deut. 13:17 "And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;"

Verses 22-23: These verses reinforce the Old Testament viewpoint that religious ritual devoid of spiritual reality and a life of total allegiance to a sovereign “Lord” is worthless (Psalm 40:6-8; Isa. 1:10-20; Micah 6:8).

1 Samuel 15:22 "And Samuel said, Hath 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 hearken than the fat of rams."

“To obey is better than sacrifice”: This is an essential Old Testament truth. Samuel stated that God desires heart obedience over the ritual sacrifice of animals (Psalm 51:16-17; Isa. 1:10-17). The sacrificial system was never intended to function in place of living an obedient life, but was rather to be an expression of it (Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Micah 6:6-8).

“Even if Saul’s intentions had been pure, he still disobeyed God’s decree. Partial obedience is just another form of disobedience (Psalm 51:17; Prov. 21:3).

This is one of the most important statements in the entire Bible. From the beginning, God has wanted His people to obey Him. Saul wanted to do things his way. He did not have his heart stayed upon God. Jesus said the same thing in the following Scripture.

John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Many times, we do not understand why God has commanded us to do something. It is not our place to question His commands. We must just do what He commands us. He knows what is best, whether we understand or not.

Verses 23-26: Saul's family line had already been "rejected" from the ongoing theocracy (in 13:14). Here, Saul himself is set aside as king. When God selects someone for a mission, that person should never fear the crowd or obey their voice, as Saul admitted to doing.

1 Samuel 15:23 "For rebellion [is as] the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness [is as] iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from [being] king."

"Rebellion ... stubbornness": Saul needed to see that his real worship was indicated by his behavior and not by his sacrifices. He demonstrated himself to be an idolater whose idol was himself. He had failed the conditions (12:13-15) which would have brought blessing on the nation. His disobedience here was on the same level as witchcraft and idolatry, sins worthy of death.

"Because thou has rejected ... he hath also rejected": A universal principle is given here that those who continually reject God will one day be rejected by Him. The sins of Saul caused God to immediately depose Saul and his descendants forever from the throne of Israel.

Saul had never given his heart completely over to God. He was a follower of God (He knew of God), but had never given the LORD all of his heart. Unshakeable faith in the LORD comes from a heart stayed upon God. Rebellion comes from a heart stayed upon self. A self-willed person is actually worshipping himself. This self worship is the worship of an idol. The idol just happens to be self. You can see that to rebel against God or to stubbornly try to have our way over God's way would bring complete destruction. Saul rejected the perfect will of the LORD, and the LORD in turn rejected Saul.

1 Samuel 15:24 "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice."

"I have sinned": This overdue confession appears to be generated more by a concern over consequences (regret), than by sorrow over having offended holy God (repentance). He bypasses his personal responsibility by shifting blame to the people.

Saul, now, blames the people for his own sin. He does admit he has sinned, and asks forgiveness.

1 Samuel 15:25 "Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD."

“Turn again with me”: Saul was concerned about having Samuel’s visible presence as a show of support in front of the people (15:30).

This appears that Saul is seeking forgiveness of Samuel rather than from God. He wants to participate in the victory celebration before the LORD.

1 Samuel 15:26 "And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel."

Not being satisfied with his repentance and confession, he was still extenuating his sin, and laying the blame of it on the people. This he said by way of resentment, and as expressing his indignation at him, though he afterwards did return with him on a change of his mind; which a good man may be allowed to make, without any imputation of falsehood or a lie unto him.

"For thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel": Which is repeated from (1 Samuel 15:23), for the confirmation of it, and to let Saul know that his pretended confession and repentance had made no alteration in the decree and sentence of God respecting the kingdom.

We see that Samuel first just says no, to the request of Saul.

Verses 27-28: In the customs of the ancient Near East seizing the edge of the robe was a symbolic gesture of submission or supplication. The symbol turns against Saul; as the robe has been torn, so the Lord” has torn Saul’s “kingdom” from him.

1 Samuel 15:27 "And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent."

From Saul, a different way from Gilgal, perhaps towards his own city Ramah, with an intention to have nothing more to say to Saul, or to do with him, or to see his face no more; so displeased was he with him.

"He laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle”: In order to detain him, and prevent his departure from him, and his going a different way.

"And it rent": Samuel pulling away from him with great vehemence and warmth. The Jewish Rabbins are divided about this, whose skirt was rent; some say it was Samuel that rent the skirt of Saul and by this signified to him, that he that cut off the skirt of his garment should reign in

his stead. Whereby Saul knew that David would be king when he cut off the skirt of his robe (1 Sam. 24:4). Others, that Samuel rent the skirt of his own mantle himself, which is the way of good men when things are not right. But the plain sense is, that Saul rent the skirt of Samuel's mantle, which, when Samuel saw, he understood what that rent was a sign of, as expressed in the following verse.

Some scholars believe that this is speaking of Saul catching hold of Samuel's mantle and tearing it, trying to stop him from leaving. I personally believe this to be a way Samuel was saying, that Saul will no more be clothed with authority. I believe Samuel removed the mantle of Saul. He was taking off his garment of authority symbolically.

1 Samuel 15:28 "And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbor of thine, [that is] better than thou."

“Rent the kingdom”: Saul’s judgment was a settled matter on the day of his disobedience with the Amalekites. Samuel used the illustration as it vividly portrayed how God would take the kingdom from Saul as he had just torn Samuel’s robe.

“A neighbor”: This was a reference to David (28:17).

Samuel is speaking of the authority being given to David, as if it had already happened. God was not looking for someone with great power within himself, but someone who would love the LORD with all his heart. This will happen in the very near future. Samuel is speaking prophetically.

1 Samuel 15:29 "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he [is] not a man, that he should repent."

“The Strength of Israel”: This was a unique title of God (Micah 1:15).

While (15:11, 35), describe God’s sorrow at Saul’s actions, this verse (echoing Numbers 23:19), asserts that once God sets His mind to do something, He does not change course. God would indeed carry out His plan to remove Saul.

The word translated “Strength” carries with it the further ideas of preeminent brilliance and perpetuity. Therefore, the focus is on the Lord in all His magnificence and glory. This Glorious One is Israel’s only Strength. (See the similar sentiment in Psalm 3:3). Here the emphasis is on God’s immutability, therefore serving to keep the statement (in verse 11), in proper balance.

This is speaking of God, who has no need to repent. "Strength", in this, is speaking of God. Saul had forgotten this very thing. He thought it was by his own might, he had won the war.

1 Samuel 15:30 "Then he said, I have sinned: [yet] honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God."

“Honor me”: Saul was still thinking of himself and how he could best salvage the situation for self-gain.

Saul was a very proud man, who did not want to be humbled before his own men. It appears that, Saul had repented here, but in the same sentence he asks for the people to honor him. He possibly just wants recognition for winning the war.

1 Samuel 15:31 "So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD."

“Samuel turned again after Saul” Samuel agreed to follow Saul, perhaps seeing this as the wisest course of action for the nation at that time.

Samuel would allow him to celebrate the victory, as the king of the people. The honor of the office of king is what is meant, not honor specifically for Saul.

1 Samuel 15:32 "Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past."

This he said very probably to some of Saul's officers, and in his presence, and before all the people met together for sacrifice.

"And Agag came unto him delicately": Fat and plump, as the Vulgate Latin version, and yet trembling, as that and the Septuagint. Well dressed in the garb and habit of a king, and with the air and majesty of one. Or with pleasure and joy, as Kimchi, choosing rather to die than to be a captive, and live in such reproach as he did. Though R. Isaiah and Ben Gersom give the sense of it, that he came bound in chains, and fetters of iron, according to the use of the word (in Job 38:31).

"And Agag said, surely the bitterness of death is past": This he said, either as not expecting to die, that since he had been spared by Saul, the king of the nation. A fierce and warlike prince, he had nothing to fear from an ancient man and a prophet, and who now bore not the sword of justice. Especially when he came into his presence, and saw his form, which showed him to be a man of clemency and mercy, as Ben Gersom observes. Or as expecting it, and so Kimchi interprets it to this sense, "the bitterness of death is come"; and is near at hand, and will be soon over. Or suggesting that that which was bitter, to others grievous and terrible, was to him sweet and desirable. But the former sense seems best by what follows.

It appears that Agag was terribly afraid. He was hoping that the threat of death for him was over, but now he is not sure.

1 Samuel 15:33 "And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal."

Samuel carried out the task Saul never did, bringing justice to the Amalekites as God had commanded (Deut. 25:17-19).

“Hewed Agag in pieces”: This was an act of divine judgment to show the holy wrath of God against wanton sin. Sadly, the Israelites did not exterminate the wicked Amalekites, so they came back later to raid the southern territory and take women and children captive, including David’s family (see 1 Sam. Chapter 30).

This seems so cruel, but we must remember, he was a cruel murderer of women and children. He deserves to die for the cruel murders he committed. Samuel just carries the punishment out by cutting him into pieces. Samuel may not have actually cut him to pieces himself. He might have spoken the sentence, and someone else carried it out.

1 Samuel 15:34 "Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul."

His native place and where his usual residence was.

"And Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul": Which was also his birth place, and where was his father's house, and where he had his palace, and kept his court. And took its name from him, to distinguish it from another Gibeah; and so Josephus says it was called Gabathsaoule, and was about thirty furlongs or four miles from Jerusalem.

Samuel had done exactly as God had sent him to do. Saul went his separate way to his home. It appears that, whatever celebration they had, has already occurred and they went home afterward.

1 Samuel 15:35 "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel."

“Samuel came no more to see Saul ... mourned”: Samuel never went to visit the rejected King Saul again in his life (1 Sam. 28:11-19). On at least one further occasion, Saul sought Samuel (19:24).

Samuel grieved for Saul, because he loved Saul. Just because someone is not living as he should, does not stop us from loving him. Samuel had anointed Saul and he felt a little responsible for Saul as well. God had a divine purpose for Saul and Saul did not carry that purpose out. God will not overrule the will of man. God called him to be a noble king, but Saul had to answer that call for it to be so. The sad thing was that God was sorry he had made Saul king, because Saul greatly disappointed Him.

1 Samuel Chapter 15 Questions

1. Why should Saul listen to the Word of God coming through Samuel?
2. What has Saul rebelled against?
3. Samuel tries to convince Saul, that what two things are the most important to do?

4. What had the LORD remembered about Amalek?
5. What did the LORD tell Saul to do to Amalek?
6. Why did God not want the Israelites to keep the animals?
7. The LORD wanted to purge the land of even the _____ of the Amalekites.
8. How many men of Israel came to fight with Saul?
9. How many men from Judah came to help?
10. What was the only known city of Amalek?
11. Who did Saul let go free, before the battle?
12. Why did he spare them?
13. Saul smote the Amalekites from _____ to _____.
14. What happened to Agag?
15. Which of the animals did they spare?
16. In verse 11, it repenteth the LORD that he had done what?
17. This grieved Samuel; and he _____ all night.
18. Samuel was the _____, or _____, leader of Israel.
19. Where had Saul gone after the battle?
20. Why had Saul not reported back to Samuel after the battle?
21. What did Saul do, when he saw Samuel?
22. What question does Samuel ask Saul?
23. What excuse did Saul make about the animals?
24. When was Saul made the head of the tribes of Israel?
25. What had changed about Saul?
26. What had Saul's accomplishments done to him?
27. Who is Saul like in verse 20?
28. What excuse did Saul give for the people taking the choice animals?

29. Rebellion is as the sin of _____.
30. Why had the LORD rejected Saul being king?
31. Who does Saul try to blame with his sin?
32. In verse 25, Saul is seeking _____ forgiveness.
33. Samuel told Saul, in verse 28, the LORD hath rent the _____ of Israel from him.
34. "Strength", in verse 29, is who?
35. What did Samuel do to Agag?
36. Why did Samuel grieve for Saul?