

Hack Your Agag to Pieces, Or It Will Hack You to Pieces - 1 Samuel 15

This will be the first of two messages from 1 Samuel 15. I originally planned to study the story of King Saul and his disobedience to God's command to kill all of the Amalekites. But as I studied, I realized that this story prompts great criticism from atheists who believe that it demonstrates that God cannot exist, because if there is a God, He could not possibly approve of killing an entire race of people. So, today's message will focus on the apologetic issues related to this OT story. Perhaps a better for this sermon would be "God's Righteousness and the Slaughter of the Amalekites." We will come back in two weeks to look at Saul's sinful acts, the excuses he offered, and lessons that we can learn from his failures.

1 Samuel 15:1–9 *"Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. 2 This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. 3 Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.' "* 4 *So Saul summoned the men and mustered them at Telaim—two hundred thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand men from Judah. 5 Saul went to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the ravine. 6 Then he said to the Kenites, "Go away, leave the Amalekites so that I do not destroy you along with them; for you showed kindness to all the Israelites when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites moved away from the Amalekites. 7 Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. 8 He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. 9 But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.*

Isn't this a lovely title? "Hack you Agag to Pieces." After much time in Romans, I thought that we could do with something light hearted. Actually, the sermon title comes from another preacher, Joel Osteen. No, of course Joel Osteen would never preach a sermon with as troubling a title as this. This title was originally used by a friend from Baptist Bible Seminary, Geoff Kirkland. You can find his sermon at www.christcommunity-church.org/site/audidownloads.asp?sec_id=140001636&nc=1277602615864

WHY a sermon on 1 Samuel 15?

There are two reasons I have chosen to preach from 1 Samuel 15. Each of these reasons will form the theme for these two sermons. First, atheists attack the **"morality of God"** based on this and other where God commands Israel to go to war against others. This

particular text is often cited as a trump card against Christianity because God commands King Saul to kill every living thing from among the Amalekites. Answering this charge will be the theme of today's sermon.

A second reason is that Christian morality is being compromised as we become infected by our post-Christian culture. We will look at this more closely as we examine Saul's excuses for his sin in our next sermon.

Defending the Character of God in a Day of Moral Rebellion

We cannot defend the *morality* of God, because morality *comes from* God. Morality can define us, but it cannot define God. Rather, we speak of God's Character. I would like for us to examine how it is completely within the character and prerogative of God to judge sinful people, and to use other sinful people as the instruments of His justice. Did not God use a donkey to speak to Balaam? He used Babylon and Assyria to judge His people, Israel. He used a star to draw wise men to the cradle of Jesus. He can use anyone or anything He chooses.

What Do You Think About the Command to Kill all of the Amalekites? I must admit, it is a concern. It is one of the hardest stories in the Bible. From our point of view, we are tempted to say, "why not give them another chance?" Why not save them? Why not warn them?

Here's what Atheists have to say:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.

- Richard Dawkins, "The God Delusion"

The Bible may, indeed does, contain a warrant for trafficking in humans, for ethnic cleansing, for slavery, for bride-price, and for indiscriminate massacre, but we are not bound by any of it because it was put together by crude, uncultured human mammals."

— Christopher Hitchens (God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything)

Those are very serious accusations, made in anger and hatred of God (the God they deny). And those accusations are based on this chapter. Answering this accusation is important in the day in which we live.

Does God's Command to Kill the Amalekites Make God Evil? Here are Five Reasons why the order to kill all the Amalekites does not violate the character of God.

I. I Am Not God.

- A. When God declares something, it is morally right, because morals are derived from God.
- B. Those who claim that God is not moral defeat their own argument.
 1. William Lane Craig offers the following syllogism:
 - a. If God does not exist, objective moral values do not exist.
 - b. Objective moral values do exist.
 - c. Therefore, God exists.
 - d. In fact, insofar as the atheist thinks that God **did something morally wrong** in commanding the extermination of the Canaanites, he affirms premise (2).
www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5767
 - e. Craig calls this Divine Command Ethics. In the same article he writes, "*According to ... **divine command ethics** ...our moral duties are constituted by the commands of a **holy and loving God**. Since God doesn't issue commands to Himself, He has **no moral duties to fulfill**. He is certainly not subject to the same moral obligations and prohibitions that we are. For example, I have no right to take an innocent life. For me to do so would be murder. **But God has no such prohibition. He can give and take life as He chooses.**"*
 2. Modernism followed the morality of **relativism**.
 - a. Relativism had problems.
 - b. How can society work when there is no moral foundation?
 - c. Relativism led to selfish, hedonistic lifestyles.
 - d. Atheist Sam Brown follows this rule. He tries to dismiss the need for an objective source for morality. He claims that we know what is moral by what makes us happy. "For there to be objective moral truths worth knowing, there need only be better and worse ways to seek happiness in this world." (Brown, "Letter to a Christian Nation, 23).
 - e. In that case, Hitler and Stalin's morality were OK because a millions were more happy when they killed.
 - f. If Brown's moral rule of "personal happiness" is the rule, then Muslim terrorists are very happy. Are they moral?
 3. So, generations later, modernists discovered that their moral foundation was leaking. Modern relativism in the area of morals led to a very self centered, hedonistic, energy consuming, money wasting, pleasure seeking world. Post-modernists claim that they reject the philosophy of relativism. Instead, they claim that morality

is derived by the group in which you find yourself. Every culture creates its own morality.

- a. Atheist philosopher Richard Rorty, “every tradition is as rational or as moral as every other.” (Quoted by Douglas Groothuis, “Truth Decay,” 189).
- b. Post moderns focus on the GROUP. Culture “creates reality.”
- c. So, no one has any authority to criticize someone else’s ideas.
- d. Homosexuality is OK because a group or society has become enlightened enough to say that it is ok.
- e. Having two mothers, fine!
- f. Having two fathers is fine. President Obama praised two father homes in his official Father’s Day proclamation from the Oval Office.
- g. But consider the implications of such a moral foundation.
 - (1) was **SLAVERY** acceptable just because certain cultures accepted it?
 - (2) Is **cannibalism** acceptable just because certain primitive tribes still practice it?
 - (3) was the **holocaust** acceptable just because Hitler’s people had come to believe that Jewish people were less than human?
 - (4) was the **CANAANITE practice of CHILD SACRIFICE** acceptable?

The second reason that we ought not be offended or surprised at this story in the Bible is that

II. I Am Not Israel

- A. Israel was a theocracy.
- B. God said to Moses: *“Go, tell them to return to their tents. But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess. So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.”* Deuteronomy 5:30–33
- C. This was a time of where WAR WAS BRUTAL and LIFE WAS HARD.
- D. Unlike Muslims who advance their religion with violence, Israel was not making CONVERTS out of the Amalekites. They were the **instruments of God’s judgment.**
- E. In as much as I am not Israel, the CHURCH is not ISRAEL. By this I mean that the rules by which the Church functions are completely different from the rules that governed the nation Israel.

1. In this dispensation, CIVIL and SPIRITUAL authority are separated.
 2. Note Romans 13:1–4 *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*
 3. Also, 1 Peter 2:13–17 *Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, 14 or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. 15 For it is God’s will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. 16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. 17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.*
- F. Notice that Christians are to respond to the governing authority with obedience., gentleness and respect. NOT with violence. (1 Peter 3:15-17)
- G. We see a noticeable difference in the way God deals with sinners in the story of Ananias and Syphira. Unlike in the Old Testament, GOD killed them. He did not order Peter to kill them.

A third reason we need not fear the new atheists is that

III. **I am not an Amalekite!** (And I don’t know any Amalekites)

A. Their HISTORY

1. Fought against Israel after they crossed the Red Sea. (Israel’s first battle). Exodus 17:8 *“The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim.”*
2. Exodus 17:14 *Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.”*

- B. Their PRACTICES.
 1. They were one of the Canaanite nations.
 2. Immorality.
 3. Violence.
 4. Child sacrifice.
 5. Would you call "911" if your neighbor was about to sacrifice his child?
 6. Would you want the Cavalry to come riding in to save you from a tyrant who was about to kill you and your children and take your land because your well had more water than his?
 7. This was the Amalekites!

- C. God's PATIENCE. God delayed his promised judgment (Exodus 17:14) for 400 years!

Continuing,

IV. **I Am Not the Center of the Universe!**

- A. The BIG STORY is about GOD, not me!
- B. When you have a world view without God, SELF will ultimately fill the void.
- C. When you have a world view without God, then ANGER is the only response to tragedy. There is no PURPOSE.
- D. "What was God doing while hurricane Katrina laid waste to their city? Surely He heard the prayers for those elderly men and women who fled the rising waters for the safety of their attics, only to be slowly drown there. These were people of faith. These were good men and women who had prayed throughout their lives. ... These poor people died talking to an imaginary friend." (Sam Brown, 52)

V. The objections are really not about **JUSTICE** or **TRUTH**, but **FREE WILL**.

- A. Atheists never seem to object to God's judgment when ISRAEL is judged by the nations of Babylon or Assyria.
- B. God is no respecter of persons. He judges all by the same standard.

VI. APPLICATION:

- A. Does God have the right to judge the Amalekites? YES
- B. Does God have the right to judge me? YES

- C. But you say, "I do not doubt God's existence OR His authority to judge all things."
- D. Really?
- E. Luke 6:46 *"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"*

- F. BUT READ the REST of LUKE 6!!!

- G. The house on the sand does not represent a life that *could have been better*. The house on the sand represents a life that is DESTROYED because someone said **WORDS of belief**
 - 1. without a **HEART of belief** or
 - 2. Actions of belief.

- H. Don't be deceived about your belief in God
- I. We live in a day where you can believe ANY WAY you WANT without consequence or interference
 - 1. Parental authority is laughed at
 - 2. Church authority is not even considered
 - 3. We justify ANY FORM of entertainment as if God either doesn't care or will not hold us accountable
 - 4. We derive our attitudes about ALMOST EVERY SOCIAL ISSUE from our CULTURE.
 - 5. We live by the world's morals
 - 6. We have adopted the world's issues
 - 7. We've lost the ability to discern how much the philosophy of the world has infected our thinking.

- J. Understand the JUSTICE and RIGHTEOUSNESS of GOD

- K. REPENT from your sin.
- L. TURN to God to be saved.