

1 Sam. 15:10-31 (LD 31, Q. 85) “Demonstrating Genuine Reform”

For the Children: Let's say your brother hit you. You tell your parents. They confront your brother. At first, he denies it. Eventually the truth is dragged out of him. But he claims it was only a light punch. He also says it was your fault for making him angry. In any case, he was not feeling well at the time. He also points out that at the time, he was actually trying to clean up his room, just like your parents had told him to do. Your parents tell him he must ask your forgiveness. He puts on a grumpy face and mutters, "Sorry if I did anything to upset you." But is he really sorry? **Questions:** What did Saul do wrong? How did God punish him? How did he show that he really wasn't repentant?

Introduction:

First Point: The Discipline of Saul

- 1) **The Call to Total War:** Saul's sin must be seen against the background of the Lord's command to destroy Amalek completely – which goes back to their opposition to Israel during the Exodus (Ex. 17:14-16; Num. 24:20; Dt. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15:2-3). This may sound harsh to us, but the Amalekites were hostile to God and His people. God dedicated them to complete destruction. Not even spoils of war could be taken.
- 2) **Saul's Compromise:** Saul and his army made light of the Lord's command. They killed most of the Amalekites, but kept the best of the spoil. Saul kept Agag as a prisoner. This represents a failure to take seriously the world's opposition to God and His church. Similar failures are seen today, when God's people develop close relationships with unbelievers for selfish reasons. There is a similar compromise when God's people maintain a close relationship with those who have been excommunicated. Mt. 18:17 and 2 Cor. 6:14ff should be taken seriously, just as Saul should have listened to the Lord's command. There is, however, a big difference between relationships maintained with those outside God's Kingdom for selfish reasons, and situations where God's people struggle to be a good witness to those outside, to show mercy and at the same time to uphold God's honour, the good of His church and the welfare of the sinner.
- 3) **Saul's Punishment:** Saul had to be removed as king. A king was needed who would point to the Lord Jesus. God tore Saul's kingdom from him, and gave it to David. David would point to Christ by showing mercy to enemies, as well as such zeal for God's House that he refused to associate closely with rebellious covenant-members. Both elements are seen perfectly in the Lord Jesus.

Second Point: The Insincerity of Saul's 'Repentance'”

- 1) **Saul's False Claim to Obedience:** Saul claimed – falsely – that he had obeyed God. When confronted with his sin, he spoke words of repentance (vss. 24, 25). Yet neither the Lord nor Samuel accepted that “repentance.” John the Baptist warned that those claiming to repent must have fruits in keeping with repentance (Lk. 3:8). “Demonstrating genuine reform” (Q.85) means showing that we really have turned from sin for God's sake. That is what Saul could not do.
- 2) **Signs of False Repentance:** Saul's insincerity is seen in a number of ways: initially, he claims he has obeyed God and is silent about his sin (v. 13). He has to be pressed to admit his sin, because he is resistant to confession of it. He blames others. He makes excuses. He minimizes his sin. He quickly shifts attention to his alleged “good deeds” – using the spoils for a sacrifice to God.
- 3) **Signs of True Repentance:** On the contrary, true repentance openly admits sin, repents “particularly,” hates the offense against God and neighbour and wishes to set all right as quickly as possible. It does not blame others, minimize the sin or make excuses. It gives evidence that the sin is not being repeated. These are the things we long to see in those excluded from God's Kingdom, so that it may be opened up to them again.

Conclusion: