

God's Uncompromising Justice

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[0 : 00] It's wonderful to pick back up in this book of history, 1 Samuel. I had honestly forgotten how hard it is studying this.

! It's humbling. I don't have all the answers to probably many of the questions that will be popping in your mind even as we read this. But it's delightful also. It pulls us deeper and deeper into all of God's Word and makes us just open to learn and receive from Him.

So that's been my prayer, even as you hear God's Word read, that the Holy Spirit would illumine what it is that you and I are supposed to receive from Him today. I'll read this, trusting it as God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, and sufficient Word.

Yes, even in the Old Testament in a difficult passage like this. And if you receive it that way as well at the end, respond with thanks be to God. 1 Samuel chapter 15.

Samuel also said to Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people, over Israel. Now therefore heed the voice of the words of the Lord.

[1 : 14] Thus says the Lord of hosts, I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up from Egypt.

Now go and attack Amalek. And utterly destroy all that they have and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.

So Saul gathered the people together and numbered them in Telane, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

And Saul came to a 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. And Saul attacked the Amalekites from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

[2 : 29] He also took Agag, 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. 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. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried out to the Lord all night. So when Samuel arose early in the morning to meet Saul, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul went to Carmel, and indeed he set up a monument for himself.

And he has gone on around, 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 the bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites.

[3 : 56] 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. 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 head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the Lord anoint you king of 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? And Saul said to Samuel, But I have obeyed the Lord, the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me and brought back Agag king of Amalek, and 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.

[5 : 04] So 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.

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.

When Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned, for I 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, 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.

And as Samuel turned around to go away, 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.

[6 : 23] And also the strength of Israel will not lie nor relent, for he is not a man that he should relent. 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 the Lord your God.

So Samuel turned back after Saul and Saul worshiped the Lord. Then Samuel said, Bring Agag of the Amalekites here to me. So Agag came to him cautiously.

And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. But Samuel said, 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. Then Samuel went to Ramah and Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul.

And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul and the Lord, regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.

[7 : 36] The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Amen. Lord, we declare one more time in the words of Revelation 15.

Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the saints.

We glorify your name, Lord. We thank you that you are the same God yesterday, today, and forevermore. We pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit will illumine this dark passage for us.

We pray that you will bring out from this story what is true about you. We pray, Lord, that by beholding you as our just creator, the Lord of hosts whose ways are wise and righteous, that you will apply this to our lives, that we will align ourselves to a right view of you, our God and our creator.

I pray, Lord, that you will help me. I pray that you will restrain my words. I pray that you will guard the ears of your people. I pray that only your truth will find its way into the hearts of your people and that you will be glorified, Father, as the work of Jesus Christ is exalted, even from Samuel 15.

[9 : 12] We pray this for his sake. Amen. Well, this passage we just read is a story of judgment.

First, the Amalekites are judged by God. Next, Saul is judged. And then finally, the wicked King Agag is judged. Ben Franklin once remarked that he cannot command who does not obey.

A requirement to being the king of Israel is to obey the God of this people. As I've reflected on this theme of judgment, a very heavy passage and a heavy theme this week, I think I've appreciated on a deeper level how we all obey something.

We all will give account for what we listen to, what we do, what we are obeying in our lives. One day we will give account to Jesus Christ himself.

Romans 2.16 says, There will be a final judgment day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. That's Jesus Christ on the throne as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, judge of all.

[10 : 36] God's anointed King, the Messiah. He is coming again. His second coming is not a coming of grace. That's the age we're in now. It's a coming of judgment.

So the message for today is to see the unchanging God's uncompromising justice. It's the justice of God that's elevated and put on display in a shocking way even to us today.

God is just. God must punish evil because of the absolute impartial righteousness that is inherent to his character as our perfect holy creator.

God is just.

And that's our just fatherly God. The sins of one generation and the seed of the serpent who hate God, hate his kingdom and hate his people will be brought to justice one day.

[12 : 06] And he does this in an uncompromising way. Because God is just, he does not bend. He does not make concessions. Evil will not go unpunished because God is just and God is powerful.

So I want to do my best to open up this truth of God's uncompromising justice for us today with five observations about God himself. When we come across difficult passages in reading God's word, and you do this probably every week as you're studying God's word.

Good advice was to start with what does this say about God, and then the application usually takes care of itself. So here's the first proposition.

God's commands are clear. We might not understand them, but if there's one thing we can say about the first few verses in this chapter is that God was very clear.

Look at chapter 15, verse 1. Samuel also said to Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people. So God is clear that these are his people, God's people, not Saul's people.

[13 : 21] Now, therefore, heed the voice of the words of the Lord. You have one job, Saul. Heed the voice of the words of the Lord.

God is so clear. In this case, as the anointed one, the anointed king given an army by God himself, Saul is to carry out judgment that's been deserved for this people from long ago.

In the fullness of God's time. No one else needs to understand. This is what the anointed one is supposed to do. We can look back on this whole history and just as God's been patient toward Israel, God's been patient to the nations, even those that opposed his people coming out of Egypt. God has allowed all these sinners to behold his wondrous works and to repent of their idols, repent of their hatred of God and turn to God.

And now it's the fullness of time for judgment. And verse two, thus says the Lord of hosts.

Remember how significant that name is, even for Samuel.

[14 : 30] The Lord of hosts. This is how his mother prayed to God. When most of the nation seemed wicked. It means Yahweh, Sabaoth, the Lord of armies, the commander of the army of the angels of heaven and the general of God's heavenly kingdom that is intruding to earth.

Yahweh, Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts. He is not silent. He speaks and his commands are clear. He says in verse two, I will punish Amalek.

Who is going to punish this people? It's God himself. In other words, if there is victory, it is God's doing. He will punish the people of Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he ambushed him on the way when he came up out of Egypt.

In Exodus 17, 14, we read that the Lord said to Moses, write this for a memorial. In the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

It's to be written down and remembered as a memorial for the people passed on from one generation to the next. Look at verse three in our passage. Now go and attack Amalek and utterly destroy.

[15 : 55] Blot out the remembrance of this people. Literally strike them. All that they have and do not spare them. Moses didn't just write this down in the book of Exodus for the first generation coming out.

He also preached this again in Deuteronomy 25 to the second generation. That's what the book Deuteronomy means. Namas is law. Dudo is the number two. So the second giving of the law to the next generation as they go on into the promised land without Moses.

Deuteronomy 25, 17. Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt. How he met you on the way. Listen to the details now.

Amalek attacked your rear ranks and all the stragglers, the weak. That were in the back of the procession that God was leading out.

When you were tired and weary. That's what Amalek did. Amalek did not fear God. Therefore it shall be when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around.

[17 : 03] In the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance. Then once you have rest in the land. You will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

This has been a long time in the making. It wasn't for Joshua to do. It was for the king, the anointed one. Once they're settled in the land for him to carry out. You shall not forget.

The command is very clear. Kill all. And the word is almost a religious word. It's devote all or consecrate all to destruction.

As an offering to the Lord. Meaning it's going to be pleasing to God. When the enemies of God are slain. Stricken. That's a sacrifice.

That's pleasing to God. It would be too late for those enemies of God to repent at this point. Israel is God's people.

[18 : 08] God is their deliverer. God does not let his enemies escape his justice. And those who oppose God's mission to create a kingdom on earth for himself.

You oppose what God is doing. You're opposing the mission of redemption. You will pay. You will suffer God's wrath.

God is not going to be able to create a kingdom on earth for us. My understanding of the connection between the coming out of Egypt and what God is doing now is this. Moses was a shadow of Christ's first coming as a servant, as a deliverer.

Think of how Moses was a prince in Egypt that then became a slave. He identified with the slave people to deliver them from bondage as God's obedient servant.

And now Saul is a different shadow. Saul is to be a picture of Christ's second coming, I believe. He's anointed. He's crowned with honor.

[19 : 11] He's given an army to execute a final judgment upon God's enemies who hate the work of his anointed one and who hate God's people. And as the king of Israel, there is one great commandment that the king must follow above all else.

He must listen to the word of the Lord because God's commandments are clear. Psalm 19.8 says the commandments of the Lord are radiant. That's how clear they are, giving light to the eyes.

Not only are God's commandments clear, a second observation about God from this passage is that God's will is perfect. God's will is perfect even in what God instructs in this difficult passage.

We continue reading in verse four that there were 2,000 foot soldiers. I divided that number by the 11 tribes and it comes out to an average of 18,000 per tribe because Judah is listed separately.

And it says only 10,000 from the tribe of Judah, almost half. And I don't mean to spend a lot of time. I'm trying to not pass over difficult portions. But in Genesis 49.10, we have this prophecy that the scepter shall not depart from the tribe of Judah.

[20 : 28] So what is this man from the tribe of Benjamin doing with the scepter? It's also, I think, foreshadowing, at least in the narrative, a king that will be coming from the tribe of Judah. But for whatever reason, they're listed separately with Judah contributing less to Saul's campaign.

In verse five, we read that Saul came to a city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. God's people were on the defensive under Moses. Remember, they're straggling along. They're former slaves.

They're weak and tired ones are getting picked off and wiped out. But now under God's anointed king, Saul, they will be on the offensive. Notice how the retribution is fitting to the crime.

God's people had been attacked in a cheap, unfair way. Slaying their women, slaying the stragglers, the sick, the elderly. And now Saul, the anointed king, hides in the valley, ready to ambush them in one of their cities.

In verse five, Saul came to a city of Amalek. So the punishment that God has designed in the fullness of time corresponds to the sins of God's enemies.

[21 : 41] The Lord of hosts is victorious in this attack. The Lord delivers. He keeps his word. Saul has the power of office to carry out the order.

He assembles a nation. He attacks. He's giving orders. He has the understanding of God's command. He understood this has to do with how people set themselves in relation to the Israelites as they were delivered from slavery.

And the Kenites were kind and gracious toward this former slave people. So he understood even the purpose behind it. You could say the theology behind God's command.

And he spares the Kenites. So it wasn't for lack of power that Saul disobeyed. It wasn't for lack of understanding. God was very clear. In verse eight, we read that Saul utterly destroyed all the Amalekite people with the edge of the sword.

But here's the big exception. Not trusting that God's will is perfect. Not trusting God as most wise. Agag, the king, Saul kept alive.

[22 : 45] And in verse nine, the guilt for this disobedience to God is shared. Verse nine says, but Saul and the people. Saul and the people.

So when Saul blames the people, there's likely truth in that. The people had a part in this sin to not obey God fully. And Saul certainly had a part as the king. They did not destroy Agag nor the best of the sheep and the oxen, the lambs.

All that was good, they were unwilling to utterly destroy them. See, while God's will is perfect, man does not submit his will to God.

Man's will is bound under the curse of sin, under Adam in the fall. But everything despised and worthless that they were willing.

That they consecrated and devoted to destruction. They gave God the trash. The self-will of the king and the self-will of the people prevailed, in this case, over the perfect will of God.

[23 : 53] They kept the best for themselves. They devoted to God what they didn't want. And the remaining sin of our own flesh is the same as Saul and the people.

We want to be self-willed. We want to be subject to none but ourselves. Under Adam's curse, our will is bound. And it's always bent inward on ourselves.

But God so loves his people that he will not let a man rule over his people who will not first and foremost follow him as Lord and obey God as the servant.

The arrangement of the monarchy of Israel was this. The king would have authority delegated by God himself. Only to the extent that the king would submit himself to the perfect will and word of God.

We have the same principle where Jesus Christ is the king, the head of his people. And he's the head of his church. There's no authority within a church unless it be given by Christ and put subject to the word and the will of Christ, the head.

[25 : 10] We're told in Romans 12, do not be conformed to the world. Saul and the people wanted what was going to make them more profitable and prosperous in the land.

They were conformed to the pattern of the world. And they were powerless without the finished work of Christ and the Holy Spirit changing their will. But now in Christ, his power works in us to be transformed.

And we can know what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God by the ministry of the Holy Spirit showing us in his word. The third observation about God is that God's judgments are right. God's judgment is always right. God's judgment is not right. But what's set up next, beginning in verse 10, is a contrast between Samuel and Saul.

In the first approach to God, which is Samuel, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God, like we read in Romans 10, 17.

[26 : 12] Look at verse 10. now the word of the lord came to samuel saying i greatly regret that i have set up saul as king i'm not skipping over this difficult phrase i'm going to handle this at the end because there's two more relating to this god says saul has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments see the lord gave a clear commandment now the lord is judging rightly when samuel hears the word of god look what samuel does it grieved samuel and he cried out to the lord he's praying all night that's a man of god never cheering for a fellow countryman to stumble grieved when a dear friend probably not brother that's that's showing you my hand i don't think saul is a brother but he's grieved and he's going to pray and cry out to the lord all night for him he represents the heart of god to the world so samuel's religion was this listen to god's word receive what god says is true and feel deeply what god has spoken as hard as it is feel it let it stir you and move you and pray to god crying out to the lord even if it means all night verse 12 so when samuel rose early in the morning to meet saul it was told samuel saying now here's the contrast the second religion it's saw notice the opposites saw went to carmel and indeed he set up a monument who was it for in verse 12 a monument for himself where samuel's religion came through his ears the word of the lord the voice of god came and spoke saw is focused on what he and the whole nation can see a visible symbol for himself a symbol of saw's greatness saw had a religion based on sight this monument was an idol it was an idol for god's people to worship saw as this this delegate deputy steward king instead of the lord of hosts himself whose people they are do you remember how just a chapter ago chapter 14 saw took credit for the victory that god sparked through jonathan and his armor bearer then he sent out a whole pr campaign to give credit to saw well saw did not

get humbled or learn his lesson from that failure now saw takes credit directly from god himself in verse 12 it struck me the interesting description of of what saw does they say saw has gone on around passed by gone down it's creating an image of saw wandering around isn't it remember how he couldn't find the donkeys and he's going from one place to the other this whole lap that he had to take he's a man who's walking going passing by going around and yet it's not by faith i'm reminded of second corinthians 5 7 how those who follow christ as his disciples walk but we walk by faith with our eyes set on christ not by sight verse 13 then samuel went to saw and saw said to him blessed are you of the lord now notice who saw is speaking to saw is not crying out to the lord in prayer he's addressing samuel

we might be able to infer that as as saw is thinking as long as samuel sees me as sincere i'm good that's very tempting in most religions isn't it as long as this priest this pastor sees me as being sincere i should be good the lord wants you to go directly to himself you don't repent to man you repent before god saw said i have performed the commandment of the lord i hope you pick up the irony here the anointed king the anointed king put in charge of god's people and god's army has made a massive declaration i have performed the commandment of the lord this is saw declaring it is finished is it did he accomplish the mission that god gave him to do and notice how he quickly tries to slide into blessing blessed are you blessed am i i succeeded everything should be good now i did it but this prophet is faithful he's not interested in tickling saul's ears look at verse 14 but samuel said what then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of oxen which i hear in verse 15 saul said shifting the blame showing his bondage just like adam they have brought them from the amalekites for the people spared the best of all these things oh and they did it to sacrifice it to the lord remember when adam said eve made me do it oh and by the way you're the one who gave me eve shifting the blame blaming it back on god unrepentant he says the rest we have utterly destroyed can't we compromise here negotiate partial obedience is enough for blessing verse 16 then samuel said to saul be quiet it's a very polite king james way to put it in hebrew it's hold back you which is loaded as well isn't it your flesh your ego your idolatry your self-worship is too much right now hold back you all of you just back off too much verse 17 let's back it way back saw do you remember how you got to be in this office it was the lord who anointed you king over israel the lord sent you on a mission and said in verse 19 then why did you not obey the voice of the lord there's the refrain one more time it was clear and saul says listen to him double down in verse 20 but i have obeyed the voice of the lord and gone on the mission which the lord sent me verse 21 but the people are the ones who took of the plunder and he just repeats the same excuse god's judgment is right isn't it saul heard god's words but he was not changed by them saul twists god's words just like the serpent did and adam and eve learned from the serpent to do he takes license for himself he knows better so he thinks and he wants to hurry on to practicing his outward religion once again thinking everybody can be blessed psalm 119 verse 37 declares this righteous are you oh lord and upright are your judgments god's judgment is right the fourth out of five observations about god is this god delights in obedience god delights in obedience in verse 22 samuel responds one more time in this dialogue has the lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the lord samuel is a preacher with one point he keeps making that same point over and over and he says behold to obey is better than sacrifice to heed than the fat of rams now he says something that we have to wrestle with for rebellion in verse 23 is as the sin of witchcraft literally the hebrew word is the sin of divination it's to consult with dead spirits it's to speak with demons to rebel against god is to want the voice of demons also foreshadowing another event in saul's life it's to hear another voice and act according to the words of another spirit that opposes god that's what rebellion is that's what disobedience is and he says in verse 23 stubbornness literally insubordination to remove yourself from being submissive subordinate to the rule of god out of order with god as the lord is as the iniquity of idolatry every time we put ourselves out of order insubordinate to god we are making ourselves a lower god we are wanting to obey our own will rather than surrender to the will of god the creator samuel says that god has rejected you from being king how could god not do that god's judgments are right and god delights in obedience this is not an anointed king through whom god can pour out the blessings that he so wants to give his people saul fall short of the glory of god verse 24 then saul said to samuel i have sinned so we need to be listening and wondering is this true repentance is it sincere is this a turning point in saul's life saul goes on to say in verse 24 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 return with

me that i may worship the lord one commentator put it in a way that to me made sense see what you think saul's plea for pardon is made to samuel not to god see that in verse 25 he's talking to samuel please pardon me now as a contrast remember when david also sinned against many people uriah bathsheba the entire nation his other wives but david was so consumed by his offense against god that nothing else could even come into david's mind until he had confessed his sins to god directly remember psalm 51 where he prays his repentance psalm 51 verse 4 david wrote against you you only have i sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgments would you turn back to first samuel chapter 12 three chapters back and look at verse 14 this is when samuel is anointing saul to be the king is giving him the commission to serve as the anointed king of god's people and listen to what he has to do it's two things first samuel 12 verse 14 fear the lord serve him and obey his voice do not rebel against the commandments of the lord so you can summarize that list as these two things hear the word of god obey the word of god do those two things you fear god and you listen to him you listen to god's voice you obey him yet by his own admission saul had feared the people and obeyed their voice would you look back at our sermon passage chapter 15 look at verse 24 he failed in his commission as the king in verse 24 right before verse 25 begins saul says i feared the people though my commission as king was to fear god and i obeyed the voice of the people though my commission was to obey the voice of god well now saul's confession we're told the motivation behind it he had been publicly exposed it's a confession of sin prompted not by inward conviction but by the fear of people continuing now to control him i've come to the conclusion that this was only an outward repentance maybe to escape punishment but most likely to save face before the nation what god delights in is obedience and repentance that are inward a contrition of heart realizing that our sin is rebellion against our loving god in verse 26 samuel says 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 he's not saying you're you're banished you're hopeless there's no gospel there's no invitation for you to repent he's saying in the office of king you're removed this is stripped away from you though it won't happen immediately it'll happen over time and this was really gracious of the lord to remove from saul the idols that he had his idols were the throne and a dynasty to glorify his name just like this monument that he set up it was gracious of god to strip away the idols from saul and the lord will do this in us won't he those things we hold on to as a love something that i'm bringing out of order out of subjection to seeking first god and his kingdom and his righteousness and when god strips away idols that keep us from receiving his grace this is his kindness as our loving father it's to teach us to enjoy complete satisfaction in him alone now in verse 27 samuel turned around to go away but saul seized the edge of his rope and tore it in numbers 15 verses 38 and 39 god commands the israelites to weave tassels into the corners of their garments that are to remind them quote to remember all the commandments of the lord and to do them not to follow after your own heart or your own eyes see the connection verse 28 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 these words in verse 28 are a transition in first samuel it's the beginning of the end for saul and the beginning of the rise for the next anointed king in chronological redemptive history the next man though he too will fall short of god's glory ultimately but it's david a better shadow of christ the substance from this point on the narrative will begin focusing on the calling and rise of the man after god's own heart who is better because obedience is better than sacrifice david was far from perfect but he was a man of obedient faith and this made all the difference in verse 30 saul said i have sinned now listen to the the insight into his heart and his motives all along to determine whether his repentance was sincere i have sinned yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before israel return with me that i may worship the lord this is evidence that saul feared losing the acclaim he held for his position before men more than fearing god the loving lord of hosts verse 31 samuel turned back after saul what message does that send they walked together a ways and saul worshiped the lord if his repentance was going through the motions for public appearance we can infer that was true of the way in which he worshiped the lord well here's the fifth and final one for today god's decree will not fail though saul failed god's decree does not fail in verse 32 samuel said bring agag the king of the amalekites here to me so agag came to samuel cautiously our imagination can paint that one a lot right agag is guy killing pregnant women from a line of people who that's how you get to be promoted in the army is showing your ruthlessness demolishing the weaklings striking down those who are tired and weak and frail and

celebrating it and then here's samuel who we know is very old he's been very old for a long time now and agag this wicked cruel violent man comes to samuel cautiously the king who just slayed the amalekites and is now probably got agag on chains and parading him mocking him he sees the posture of saul before this man samuel and he follows sue but all he knows to appeal to is emotion he says surely the bitterness of death is past you know maybe we can just move on maybe we're let things cool down and we can get on with how life is going to be going forward but samuel reminded him not merely of his people's ancient guilt but also of his personal sin when god judges sin it's on those two levels it's the sin we inherit and that it's our long line of sinning ancestors all the way back from adam and eve no one escapes that deserved judgment piled on to that is our own personal sin falling short of the glory of god in verse 33 samuel said your sword has made women childless and so shall your mother be childless among women and samuel hacked agag in pieces before the lord in gilgal gilgal has become the place where god's people as a nation go to celebrate and worship before jerusalem and it's in the presence of the lord this is true of god he will punish evil from his holy presence the same god who is grace he will punish and utterly destroy all those who have rebelled against him that's the sign act that samuel

[46 : 20] gives the whole nation don't be like the world and don't stop trusting god as just and powerful here's a display of both we read in verse 34 then samuel went to ramah and saul went up to his house in gibeah verse 35 samuel went no more to see saul until the day of his death nevertheless samuel mourned for saul and that's a summary of the relationship of these two men from now on these two cities gibeah of saul and where was samuel ramah ramah of samuel are only about 10 miles away they could have easily visited one another samuel mourned for saul he still shared that grief no doubt he continued to pray for him but the lord had shifted the office and the anointing to another and that's what samuel will work at next but this story of saul's failure and agag's judgments does not end here god's decree will not fail turn back real quick to first samuel chapter 9 you need to see these things with your own eyes first samuel chapter 9 verse 1 what tribe was saul from his dad's name was kish and he was from the tribe of benjamin it says in verse 1 saul was a benjamite now turn to esther turn to esther chapter 2 remember saul was from the tribe of benjamin the story of esther begins not with esther but with another hebrew man in exile his name is mordecai esther chapter 2 verse 5 once you find that figure out what tribe is mordecai from esther chapter 2 verse 5 says that mordecai was a benjamite now turn to esther chapter 9 a few more pages forward esther chapter 9 verse 23 this is a story of the israelites in exile god putting a queen named esther into a position that god would use to spare his people and to bring judgment on god's enemies the enemies of god in the book of esther are led by this man named haman look at esther chapter 9 verses 23 through 25 so the jews accepted the custom which they had begun as mordecai had written to them verse 24 because haman look at where he's from haman the agagite from the line of agag the enemy of all the jews had plotted against the jews to annihilate them to consume them and destroy them and this wicked plot which haman had devised against the jews would return on his own head just as in first samuel 15 these enemies of god are also judged according to their own evil god is giving sinners a long time to repent and believe just as he did to the the amalekites and the agagites but god's decree will not fail brothers and sisters this is true for you and me for our loved ones for our co-workers god is giving sinners a long time to repent and to turn to christ for salvation but when jesus returns at the hour that is known only to god we're told in matthew 25 that jesus will sit

on his glorious throne of judgment he is coming to judge as the king of kings and now comes that that phrase that in verse 11 you can turn back to our passage first samuel chapter 15 verse 11 we're told that god regrets making saw king and the last verse of our chapter says in verse 36 god regrets making you king he repeats that verse 11 and verse 36 that repetition is called an inclusio it's setting two bookmarks we need to study what's in between these two these are to be taken as one section these statements that god regrets or repents they seem to contradict what god has revealed about himself what has god revealed about himself in malachi 3 6 god says i am the lord and i do not change in james 1 17 we read that in god there is no variation or shadow of turning god doesn't make saw king and then turn and change his mind something different has to be communicated our second london confession of faith chapter 3 paragraph 1 summarizes the doctrines contained in the scripture this way god has decreed in himself from all eternity by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably all things whatsoever come to pass this is confirmed by isaiah 46 10 declaring god declares from the the end from the beginning

and from ancient times things not yet done saying my counsel shall stand i shall accomplish my purpose so what's in between these two bookends verse 11 and verse 36 saying that god regretted making saw king it's verse 29 find verse 29 and it's not to diminish the message of these two verses 11 and 36 because they're communicating something very important that god so loves his people that god can't bear to see his people being led or ruled by a king who doesn't align himself with god these are god's people and when a king gets in the way of this relationship that god himself needs with his people well he needs nothing but he he won't tolerate anything in the middle he's a jealous god and as saul puts himself as a man that's you know promoting his own ego and making monuments to worship himself god will have none of that so this is language conveying the deep love of god the unrelenting uncompromising bond that god will have with his people through an anointed king but it's not saul it will not be saul saul serves a different purpose in the unfolding of redemption redemptive history now look at verse 29 here's the clarification of what sounds difficult to our ears god will not regret giving the throne of king to one who is better than saul do you hear what god's saying there is a king i will give a throne over my people to a king far better than saul far better than david but this king must be an obedient servant this king must deliver god's people from their sin from death from hell god's anointed king the messiah must be one that will listen to god's voice heed god's commands and obey god perfectly our lord jesus christ all alone accomplished the mission that saul and every other king failed to accomplish our lord jesus did this alone tempted in the wilderness satan tempted jesus with the kingdoms of this world his for the taking in a worldly way but king jesus did not fail and how did he counter the enemy by remembering god's word he cited back the truth from scripture to satan that he had hidden in his heart that he may not sin against god he said as it is written as it is written here's the true king through whom god can bless and rule over his people jesus heeded god as his father jesus obeyed and therefore he can command he is the lord of hosts the commander of the armies of heaven hebrews 10 14 quoting psalm 40 points out jesus's obedience how i have come behold i have come to do your will oh god jesus prayed not my will but yours be done and our lord jesus christ didn't keep back the best for himself he sacrificed the best to god he consecrated himself the pure sacrifice the only acceptable sacrifice on the cross he made himself wicked agag to be hacked to pieces by the uncompromising justice of the holy god whose decree will not fail so that you and i can be his people and he can be our god we trust this from ephesians 1:11 that in christ we have obtained an inheritance!

having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will saul and agag and haman they couldn't thwart the will and the plan of god god's uncompromising justice and grace meeting on the cross of jesus christ so that you and i can have no guilt in this life and no fear of death why because there is no shadow of turning with our god god's decree will prevail king jesus commands your destiny if you are in him let's pray father we thank you for this glorious salvation that you've accomplished foreshadowed long ago promised revealed in every corner of your word we thank you for how your holy spirit shines your grace and your truth on us through the person and the work of jesus christ please help us to receive from you in this way amen