

## Hacking Agag To Pieces

I got the idea for this sermon from a chapter by the same title in John Mac Arthur's book, *The Vanishing Conscience* (Dallas: Word, 1994). I would highly recommend this book for three reasons: (1) It is on sale super cheap in CBD right now; (2) It contains some excellent observations about society's avoidance of acknowledging anything as sinful; (3) It contains a straightforward defense of total hereditary depravity, so you can see how an unabashed Calvinist defends that teaching.

### Introduction.

1. Pivotal event in the reign of Saul was disobedience to God's command in 1 Sam. 15 to annihilate the Amalekites. He sinned before then (sacrifice at Gilgal), and proved cowardly later (Goliath), but God pointed to this episode as the decisive turning point in Saul's reign (1 Sam. 15:28).
2. This account serves as a great illustration of the Christian's war with sin.

### Discussion

#### I. *Agag And Sin*

##### A. Saul and Agag.

1. The command to destroy Amalekites (15:1-3).
  - a. Amalekites were descendants of Esau (Gen. 36:12), attacked Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 17).
  - b. Whole story recorded in Deut. 25:17-19. They attacked the weakest, most vulnerable Israelites.
  - c. So Saul is to carry out in a national way the legal principle of "eye for eye."
2. After a promising start (15:7-8), Saul proved disobedient (15:8-9).
3. Samuel confronted and condemned him (15:10-11, 26).
4. Then, Samuel took matters into his own hands (15:32-33).

##### B. Like Saul, Christians are to put sin to death--completely!

1. Our conversion is really an execution, the old man of sin put to death in baptism (Rom. 6:6. 3-4).
2. But baptism does not end our conflict with sin. The old man constantly tries to revive and ruin us.
3. So, God commands us to put sin to death! (Rom. 8:12-13; Col. 3:5-6).
4. Sin must be dealt with ruthlessly and without mercy, just as Saul was to deal with Agag and the Amalekites.

- C. But just like Saul, sometimes Christians refuse to put sin to death, giving Agag a reprieve. How does this happen?

## *II. Ways Sin Is Spared*

- A. By denying it (Saul acted as if he had not sinned, "I have obeyed the command of the Lord" -- 15:10-13).
1. Others take the extra step of attempting to conceal sin:
    - a. Drunkard who hides bottle and drinks in private.
    - b. Dishonest like Ananias and Sapphira who engage in deliberate deception.
  2. If you deny your sin you will eventually delude yourself (James 1:22, 26).
  3. If you merely deny sin it will eventually destroy you (Prov. 28:13).
- B. By justifying it. (Saul attempted to justify his sin by claiming to offer the spoil as a sacrifice--15:14-15).
1. The end does not justify the means. The means must justify themselves.
  2. The catch phrase today is, "God would not want me to be unhappy." This phrase is used to justify things God blanketly condemns:
    - a. "I am unhappy in my marriage, so since God would not want me to be unhappy I can divorce", thus justifying something God says He hates (Mal. 2:16).
    - b. "I am sexually attracted to the same gender, and since God would not want me to be unhappy, I can practice homosexuality," thus justifying something God considers an "abomination" and will not tolerate in heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
  3. God wants us to be joyful, but that joy is found in the Lord (Phil. 4:4), not in iniquity.
- C. By excusing it. (Saul attempted to foist blame on the people--15:20-21, 34).
1. The blame game is played a lot of ways today:
    - a. From the beginning of the human family there has been a tendency to blame family members ("the woman you gave me....").
    - b. Now we are more sophisticated and blame genetics (not just homosexuality; "Bad temper runs in my family").
    - c. Circumstances ("life has not been fair to me so I am going to give up").
  2. David sinned as well, but the gigantic difference between him and Saul is that when David sinned, he did not deny, justify, or

excuse it, he simply confessed "I have sinned against the Lord."  
That is why he was a man after God's own heart.

### ***III. How Do We Put Sin To Death?***

- A. Recognize how horrible sin is to a "holy, holy, holy" God.
  - 1. Illus. with the rash of novels and movies portraying murderers and attempting to draw sympathy. Perhaps feel pity, until you see the pain and cost of their murder in the lives of the victim's families. From that perspective, we would have no problem executing justice.
  - 2. What pain did our crimes cost? The death of Jesus!
  - 3. We can crucify our old man of sin through constant meditation on the cross of Christ (Gal. 6:14).
  
- B. Do whatever it takes to avoid sin.
  - 1. Make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14).
  - 2. If your problem is fornication, never put yourself in a position where you are alone with the opposite sex. Or if it is drinking, don't go anywhere that serves the stuff. Jesus once told a man who had a problem with covetousness to sell his goods and give to the poor (Matt. 19).
  - 3. Extreme? Not in comparison to avoiding hell! (Matt. 5:27-30)
  
- C. Get busy doing what is right.
  - 1. Put on righteousness (Rom. 6:12-13).
  - 2. Go on the offensive against sin by doing good works (Titus 2:14; 3:14).

### **Conclusion**

- 1. Agag was cheerful when he thought he was going to be spared. Sin is always happy to be spared--because it knows it will have another opportunity to destroy you.
- 2. Ironic that in 2 Sam. 1:13 an Amalekite claimed credit for killing Saul. Saul's decision to spare the Amalekites came back to haunt him.
- 3. This battle between us and sin will never end, but the key is that we actively engage in combat, not denying our sins but confessing them (1 John 1:8-9).
- 4. But if you do not commit yourself to merciless combat against sin, some day, like Saul, it will come back to haunt and destroy you.