

JM 1.22-25 ~ *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

AP: Throughout Scripture, we see the same: God takes His commands seriously and expects the same of us: to not simply hear His word, but to obey it. And the consequences for **deciding** not to do so—regardless our **rationale**—is our **rejection**.

MT 7.24-27 ~ *“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”*

CONCLUSION – His Heart Revealed (ISM 15.30-35)

It is sad to think of the consequences of a simple mistake. The husband lost his life, and his wife, her husband. But sadly, this can happen when important commands aren't truly understood and followed. In fact, when we understand why a rule exists, we can understand better why we need to follow it.

Saul might have had any number of different **rationale** behind his **decision** to disobey God's commands and spare the king and flocks of Amalek. But what he didn't really understand was that God had a reason for His judgment—and as a result of his **rejection** of the Word of God, God would **reject** him as king.

But in the case of Saul, we see **his heart revealed**: *Then he said, “I have sinned; yet honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the Lord your God.” (ISM 15.30)* Saul was less concerned with his disobedience than his reputation before the nation. And so, his rejection was certain. *And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the Lord regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel. (ISM 15.35)*

MT 25.31-46 ~ *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

INVITATION

#655 [Exp-OTH]
08/01/2025

The Sin of Saul

PC Pchd

ISM 15

QUESTION: How important is it that I follow the commands of God?

TRN TO ISM 15

INTRODUCTION

WAR/Douglas MacArthur/History

WAR/Douglas MacArthur/Rules are Meant to be Broken

Most of us have heard the first half of this quote. And in its most common usage, it's given as an excuse of rampant and blatant disobedience. After all: **“rules are made to be broken”!** **But this seems like an odd thing for a General to say, doesn't it?** But when you understand the full quote, it begins to make more sense: his problem wasn't in a person's obedience to commands—but in a thoughtless and lazy obedience. He urged and desired for those on his commands not simply to follow his commands, but to seek to understand them.

BACKGROUND: God's Command (ISM 15.1-3)

MEDICINE/MRI/Technology Described

MEDICINE/MRI/No Metal Permitted

When I had my own MRI taken, it seemed strange and specific. Of course, I was young, and I didn't have any metal on me, so I didn't give it any thought. I lay down, was rolled into the scanner, and left without incident. And I never thought of that odd command again.

The Bible is filled with commands. Tradition states that there are 613 **“mitzvot”**, or commands, in the Torah: the first 5 books of the Bible. The Jewish people were taught and encouraged to learn them and, more importantly: to understand them. For so many of the disasters of the Bible (the ancient flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the fall of Jerusalem, for example) were rooted in the people's rejection of **God's commands**.

In some cases, like King David, we see instances where he broke covenant with God, but would eventually return to Him. Ultimately, it was in his return to God that we see how he is *a man after his own heart* (**ISM 13.14**)—a humble man willing to be corrected and directed by his God. But the king before him, Saul, was a different kind of man.

ISM 15.1-3 ~ *And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now therefore listen to the words of the Lord. ² Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. ³ Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’”*

EX: The Amalekites were descendants of Esau—the brother of Jacob who'd sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. And as a people, they'd followed their forefather's example. When the Jews had recently been freed from Egypt, the army of Amalek marched on the Jews. While they were defeated, God declared that He wasn't done with them then. Now, many years later, God was ready for them to be wiped out.

His command was simple, clear, and to our 21st Century American minds, possibly a bit shocking: destroy them. All of them. Man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey. However, being millennia removed from their contemporaries,

perhaps we should allow a bit of humility and willingness to consider that they may have known a bit better than we do, today. And while **GN** may be a millimeters separated from **ISM**, their distance in time was closer to 400 years. For 400 years, God permitted the Amalekites to live—in hopes, to change. But they did not. And at last, *the iniquity of the Amorites* was complete (**GN 15.16**).

God's command was simple. But Saul's reaction was anything but. For the rest of this chapter, we see described **the sin of Saul**—his **decision**, **rationale**, and ultimate **rejection** by God. Ultimately, I believe Saul's sin was based not about a failure to **know** the commands of God, but rather, a failure to **understand** them. And this is mimicked repeatedly in the world today. **How else can we explain the absolute availability of the Word of God, and yet, the absolute disobedience to it?**

General Douglas MacArthur sought soldiers who would not merely blindly and lazily follow his commands, but would seek to understand them. For through understanding, they would know the wisdom of them—and would therefore, be able to better and more reliably obey them. Today, God desires the same: *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.* (**JM 1.5**) To help us in this quest, let's seek to understand **the sin of Saul**. For by understanding his sin, we can better avoid committing that same sin, ourselves!

BD1: Saul's Decision (ISM 15.4-11)

MEDICINE/MRI/McAllister Incident – Leadup

How many of us have been called in to help our spouse at the doctor or around the house? Most of us would react without hesitation—seeking to provide assistance to our help-meet. And the same was true for the husband. However, I wonder...as he came to the door, **did his eyes alight on the sign warning against bringing in metal during an MRI? Did it even cross his mind?** Either way, the **decision** was made, and the door was opened.

ISM 15.4-11 ~ *So Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand men on foot, and ten thousand men of Judah. ⁵ And Saul came to the city of Amalek and lay in wait in the valley. ⁶ Then Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart; go down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them. For you showed kindness to all the people of Israel when they came up out of Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. ⁷ And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. ⁸ And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.*

EX: It doesn't take long for Saul to **decide** to go against the command of God—he destroys all the people, **but as for Agag, the king?** Him, he leaves alive. Perhaps the idea of killing a king struck him a bit too close to home. Perhaps he had some other reason. But then, as the blood of the people was still wet on their blades, he looks at all the calves and lambs and the strong and healthy of the flock, and he decides, **"Boy, it'd sure be a shame to waste them."** And instead, he chooses to save them and to destroy all the sick and unhealthy among them, instead. Basically, he took what he wanted, and destroyed what he didn't.

AP: In his wisdom, he decided that he had a better idea: a better idea of what was right and wrong; of what was good and what was evil. And often, that's the case for

us, too. We think too highly of our own wisdom and our current understanding. But when, as a result, we claim evil is good and good is evil, we fall into the same mistake of Saul and the other Israelites Isaiah warned against: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* ²¹ *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!* (**IS 5.20-21**)

BD2: Saul's Rationale (ISM 15.13-21)

MEDICINE/MRI/McAllister Incident – Permission

Maybe he did see the sign. Maybe he did think about the metal chain around his neck. But he had every reason to believe it was safe: after all, the technician who worked with this stuff every day had told him he could come in. He likely assumed the MRI was off. But it wasn't.

ISM 15.13-15 ~ *And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord." ¹⁴ And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" ¹⁵ Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the Lord your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction."*

EX: In Saul's case, I don't think we can really think his **rationale** was as innocent as the poor husband's likely was. In fact, **Saul's rationale** appears to be more of an excuse: **"don't blame me: blame the people."** When Samuel calls him on it, we see a more honest answer.

ISM 15.20-21 ~ *And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. ²¹ But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal."*

AP: **"What do you want from me, Samuel? I killed the people. I captured the king. I obeyed God, and you can't convince me otherwise."** Oh, how familiar this answer is. **"Yeah, maybe God says to do this. Maybe God says to not do that. But in general, I've followed God. God knows my heart!"** What they're saying is true. God DOES know their heart. God knew Saul's heart. And it didn't go well for him. And when we argue our **rationale** for disobeying God's commands, it won't go well for us, either.

BD3: Saul's Rejection (ISM 15.10-11; 22-29)

MEDICINE/MRI/McAllister Incident – Death

What a terrible consequence for a simple mistake. In his case, this led to a terrible and traumatic death for the husband. But for Saul, his consequences for his mistaken **decision** would be his **rejection**.

ISM 15.10-11 ~ *The word of the Lord came to Samuel: ¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night.*

EX: Saul's rejection of God led to God's rejection of him. *And Samuel said to 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." (ISM 15.26)* God doesn't desire half-obedience, but its entirety and spirit. *And 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 listen than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king." (ISM 15.22-23)*