

Dealing With Sin

by Charles Price

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Transcript

Lord, one more time we come and we humble ourselves willingly at your feet this morning. We're asking you, Lord, to speak to our hearts and we have no idea what you want to say to us, Lord. Father, we say to you today, make us willing to hear the voice of the Lord.

God, we pray that you will anoint, dear Charles, like you've never done before. Come, Lord, into this place. Touch our hearts.

May we hear the voice of the Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I arrived here with about... Am I on? Is this switched on? It is on? Can... That's it. I can hear it now. Thank you.

I arrived here with a minute to spare. I'm sorry for that. I wasn't here at the prayer time.

I was picking up a friend here, Brett Robertson, from the ferry terminal. We've not met until this morning, but we've corresponded quite a bit, and so he's come across to spend the day here today. But I understand, too, there's a group of pastors or leaders that meet often on a Thursday morning.

They're here this morning. Has that already been mentioned? And are you here? Are any of you here? There's a few of you scattered around. Okay.

Well, it's good to see you, and I know that you meet to pray for this city. And there's a very real sense that God is doing something here in Victoria, and it's a wonderful privilege for people like myself to come in from outside and to be able to sense that, as well as the particular atmosphere of this conference, which I have no doubt has its origin in the heart of God. And in bringing together folks who have a like-minded passion for revival and renewal of the church, not so the church itself is renewed, but it becomes then the agent of the gospel in a fresh way, in a powerful way.

And if you've got your Bible with you, I'm going to ask you to turn to 1 Samuel, chapter 15. I hope you've got your Bible, because we have nothing original to say, and it's good if you know what is here, because we're going to read some verses. I'm going to look into this particular story.

I spoke from 1 Samuel the other night, and a while ago I preached through parts of 1 Samuel back in Toronto. And this book, as all of Scripture, is alive with truth that is relevant for us, of course, today. And 1 Samuel, chapter 15, in verse 1, it says, Samuel said to Saul, I am the one the Lord has sent to anoint you king over his people Israel.

I'm sure I don't need to fill you in with the background to that, that the nation of Israel, after arriving in Canaan, was to be a theocracy where God ruled, but he raised up judges, and they became tired of that, and they demanded a king, and God said to Samuel, who was the last of the judges, give them one. And so Saul was the man who was appointed by God. God set him apart for this.

And Samuel said to Saul, I'm the one the Lord sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. So listen now to the message from the Lord. 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. Now go, attack the Amalekites, and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them, for to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.

Verse 7. Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havelah to Shur, to the east of Egypt. He took Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. 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. Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel. I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.

Samuel was troubled and cried out to the Lord all night, and early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul. But he was told, Saul has gone to Carmel. There he set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.

When Samuel reached him, Saul said, the Lord bless you. I have carried out the Lord's instructions. But Samuel said, what then is the bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear? And Saul answered, the soldiers brought them from the Amalekites.

They spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest. Stop, Samuel said to Saul. Let me tell you what the Lord said to me last night.

Tell me, Saul replied. Samuel said, although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel, and he sent you on a mission saying, go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites. Make war on them until you wipe them out.

Why did you not obey the Lord? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the Lord? But I did obey the Lord, Saul said. I went on the mission the Lord assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king.

The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal. But Samuel replied, does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams, for rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance is like the evil of idolatry. And because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.

Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned. I have violated the Lord's commands and your instructions. I was afraid of the people, so I gave in to them.

Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me so that I may worship the Lord. But Samuel said to him, I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you as king of Israel.

Saul is a tragic story. God chose Saul as the first king of Israel. If you read the story of Saul, you'll discover God changed Saul's heart.

The Spirit of God came on him in power. These are quotations. The people recognized him as God's anointed.

The first battle he went into on behalf of the nation of Israel, God gave them victory. The story of Saul was explicable only in terms God did, God did, God did, God called, God anointed, God enabled, God empowered. You find God described in those ways in Saul's life.

But his reign became a disaster. He eventually lost the right to rule as king, and the same God who gave the kingship to Saul took it back from him in the strongest language, which reoccurs several times. But chapter 16, verse 1, I have rejected him as king of Israel.

Now, it's very important we talk about this, and I'll tell you why. You can have a great history of God, but become rejected. As far as usefulness, I'm not talking about salvation.

As far as fruitfulness, you can experience the blessing of God on your life, and yet you can lose that blessing. You can be called by God to aspects of service, and you can see God blessing that work that he has put you in. You've known the Holy Spirit's enabling, and yet you end up bankrupt and empty.

It's been my privilege to travel in many mission fields of the world. Earlier this year, the Conference of Missionaries in West Africa. Next month, I'll be at the Conference of Missionaries in Angola, Southwest Africa.

August, the Conference of Missionaries from all over Japan. It's a great privilege to be a minister to missionaries, but I can't tell you how many times I've been in missionary situations, and missionaries are carnal. They went out with a great call from God or a great sense that God is leading me, but something's gone wrong, and as somebody said to me in West Africa, the biggest problem in this field are missionaries.

I love missionaries, so I'm not criticizing them. You know, the biggest problem in the People's Church Toronto is me, because having been called to a particular role in leadership there, it is possible to engage in that ministry and engage in that leadership, but to do so on an agenda that is separated from the agenda of God, become my agenda, and most undiscerning people won't know for years. We're going to see this in Saul.

You can stay in office as Saul did for many years, but be barren and bankrupt, and Saul's disqualification from the kingship took place through two circumstances, one of which I won't talk about is when he acted arrogantly, and because he felt he was the king, he had the right to violate the laws of God. They applauded everybody else except me, and he went and offered a burnt offering, which only a priest was allowed to do, but he thought, well, I'm bigger than the priest, I'm the king after all. When God puts people into leadership, sometimes we begin to feel that we're above the rest, but the second reason, and that was one reason God said, I'm rejecting you, but the second reason is this we've read about here today, when he was given this instruction in verse 3, go attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them.

Don't spare them, put them to death, men, women, children, infants, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys. Now, all of us have some difficulty with that. I certainly do.

But we're not going to explore those. God is God, and God has the right to give instructions that he knows the best, but seven times the verb to totally destroy is used. Totally destroy the Amalekites and all that belongs to them.

Now, it's important to know who the Amalekites were to know why this instruction was given. The Amalekites were not simply some pagan community like the Philistines or the Canaanites who were opposed to Israel. The Amalekites, as you probably know, are actually relatives of Israel.

They are descendants of Abraham. Abraham was called by God, and Abraham was given a son through whom the blessing and the promise would come. His son was Isaac.

Isaac fathered two sons, Esau and Jacob. The elder of the two was Esau, and as the elder of the two, Esau was by natural means the heir to the promise that had been made to Abraham and passed on to Isaac and would now be passed on to Esau. But you remember that Esau and Jacob were totally different.

Esau, it says, was a hairy man, and when his brother Jacob, who was smooth, he was pink, when Jacob tried to disguise himself as Esau one day when his father was old to get the blessing that the father would have given to Esau. You remember he disguised himself by killing a goat, wrapping the goat skin around his arm, and going to his father and saying, Father, give me the blessing that belongs to me. His father said, but it belongs to Esau, and it sounds like Jacob.

No, father, I'm Esau. I have a cold today. Feel me and see.

And this arm covered in a goat skin, he leaned across his father who felt his arm and said, it's the voice of Jacob, but it has the feel of Esau. He was pretty hairy. Hairy as a goat.

And the smell of Esau. Esau smelled like a goat. And so, hoodwinked by Jacob, he gave him the blessing.

And later, the birthright that goes with the blessing, he cheated and traded with a bowl of porridge and swapped it with Esau. You remember that story. Now, God wasn't that witted by this, of course.

Because God had said before already to their mother, the older will serve the younger. But nevertheless, Esau's will was never broken. He was the outdoor hairy man.

I mean, he didn't need crutches to lean on like blessings and birthrights. I can carve my own way in life. He was the self-sufficient man.

And Esau had a son called Eliphaz. Eliphaz had a concubine called Timnah, and the firstborn son to Eliphaz and Timnah was Amalek. Amalek was a grandson of Esau.

You read all that in Genesis 36. And in the line that should have been, the Amalekites should have been the Israelites, the people on whom the blessing of God rested, had it not been for Jacob cheating. And I say, God was not taken by surprise.

He knew that was going to happen. But in that sense, and we have to be very careful by superimposing types on events in Scripture, but I think the Amalekites are a picture of the flesh, that is the part of the human constitution that you and I have that should have been under the blessing of God in the Garden of Eden, but in rebellion became cursed. And that old flesh, you know, fights against the Spirit.

And when a man or woman comes to Christ and becomes enthralled by the Spirit, the biggest battle you face is not out there. The biggest battle is in here, the flesh fighting against the Spirit. And I suggest to you, and if you don't like this suggestion, that's okay, what I'm going to say this morning still applies anyway.

But I think it's a very clear picture of declaring war on that which should have known the blessing of God, but doesn't. The flesh. And Esau and his descendants became known as Edomites.

And they're set in contrast to Jacob and his descendants, the Israelites. And they're in conflict. Right down in Malachi, for instance, it says, God says, I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.

They will be called the wicked land of people always under the wrath of God. In other words, Jacob represents the elect of God, that on which God's blessing rests. And Esau represents the non-elect, that on which his blessing does not rest.

And the Amalekites are a branch of the Edomites. And so this gives some significance to this story. Whenever the Amalekites appear, you see, they're at war with the purposes of God.

They first appear when the Israelites leave Egypt and they go into the wilderness. And the first enemy they meet next to the 17 is the Amalekites. And you remember that the way in which the Amalekites were defeated there was that God told Moses to get Joshua.

It's the first time Joshua is mentioned. He's a young man. Get Joshua to get an army together.

And Moses, you go up on the mountain. Hold the staff of God in your hand. And as you hold the staff of God in your hand, Joshua in the valley will fight against the Amalekites.

And as long as the staff is held in your hand, Joshua will prevail over the Amalekites. But if the staff droops, the Amalekites will prevail over the Israelites. It's an interesting way to fight a war.

Moses is up there. Come on, Joshua. That's it.

Oh, I stopped for a scratch here. Oops! They're gaining ascendancy again. Okay, the battle is taking rest now.

Oh, here's the Amalekite coming. He's coming, coming. Whoop! Got him.

What was the teaching? It was teaching that victory is never won. It's only ever received. Moses on the mountain is representing the fact he's holding the staff of God in his hand.

And I know people say this is a picture of intercession. It may be. But the staff of God was that which Moses had in his hand at the bush.

And God said, what's in your hand? It's my staff. It represents my livelihood, my whole life. I'm a shepherd.

I've been a shepherd for 40 years in a million deserts. Throw it on the ground. But it's my livelihood.

Throw it on the ground. When he did, it turned into a snake. And God said, now take it by the tail.

Which, by the way, you don't take snakes by the tail. I lived in Africa for a couple years. You don't take snakes by the tail.

If you do, the head will turn around, right up the body, make contact with you. You'll feel a prick. You'll feel dizzy.

You'll go blue. You'll fall over. You will die.

You take a snake by the head. But no, take it by the tail. Now look after the dangerous parts, says God.

Take it by the tail. And then it's called in Exodus 4, take the staff of God in your hand. It's the staff of Moses.

He's thrown it down. God has given it back. There's a snake.

You know who the snake is, of course, don't you? Now take it by the tail. God will look after the dangerous part. And you stand in front of your enemy with the staff of God.

As Moses stood before Pharaoh, the staff of God, and many of the miracles, the plagues, involved the staff of God. Opening the Red Sea involved holding the staff of God. Now on the mountain, hold the staff of God.

He gave it to Aaron. And it became Aaron's staff, the budding, that was eventually kept in the Ark of the Covenant, you remember. That's the sidetrack.

But the point is, he's holding this up. It says, God, this is not my battle. It's yours.

This staff represents the fact. He's showing it to you. And then God said this.

After that, I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. The victory of the enemies of God is never won. It's received and appropriated by faith.

And then later, in Deuteronomy 25, God said, after 40 years, he said to Moses, remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt? When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey, cut off all who were lagging behind. They had no fear of God. And when the Lord your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you, in the land he has given you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.

Do not forget. So he begins by saying, remember, finishes by saying, do not forget. Here's the message.

Wipe out, blot out the Amalekites. Because they represent everything that is at enmity with God. Now, here in 1 Samuel 15, is the opportunity.

Now Saul is on the throne. And he is told to utterly destroy, totally destroy, everything that belongs to the Amalekites. And so I read verse 7 again.

Saul attacked the Amalekites. Verse 8, he took Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive. And all his people he totally destroyed.

But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep, cattle, fat calves, and lambs, everything that was good. These they're unwilling to destroy completely. Now notice the subtlety of that.

Generally speaking, he carried out the instructions, but he picked out some things that were good. There were some good sheep, some good calves, some good lambs, some good oxen. Don't waste them.

And as for Agag, the king, let's keep him alive. This will be good for intelligence. He can give us all kinds of information.

There were other pockets of Amalekites, you see. So he, generally speaking, carried out the instructions, but he spared Agag and kept the best of everything he describes as being good. That's when, verse 10, the word of the Lord came to Samuel.

I am grieved I made Saul king. He has turned away from me. He has not carried out my instructions.

And then in verse 13, when Samuel reached him, Saul said, the Lord bless you. I've carried out the Lord's instructions. Samuel said, then what is the bleating of sheep in my ears? What is the lowing of cattle that I hear? Now listen to this very carefully.

He's saying, Saul, if you have carried out the Lord's instruction to totally destroy all that belongs to the Amalekites, what is the bleating of sheep that I hear? What is the lowing of cattle that I hear? In other words, what are these sounds of life where God has demanded death? Now I need to make this personal to you and to me. Is there something in your life this morning that lives that God has sentenced to death? Other things that God has condemned yet you have reprieved or I have reprieved because this is good. I know it's not right, but I like it.

Paul wrote to Colossians in Colossians 3, verse 5, and said, put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. And he suggests a few things. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and

greed, which is idolatry because of these the wrath of God is coming.

Listen, do not be naive about your potential for sin or my potential for sin. God says declare war on these things, put them to death. It is true that we are not under condemnation because we're in Christ, as Romans 8, verse 1 says.

But it is also true that we are in combat with an old nature that is alive, that seeks to pull us down, that in my life, as in your life, every day I wake up, that old nature is alive and well, hankering for an opportunity to sin. Romans 7 tells us that. Alan Redpath's been quoted several times this week, and I heard Alan Redpath say more than once, he said when he was an old man, I've been a Christian for more than 50 years, and I'm as big a sinner now as I was before I became a Christian.

The only good thing about Alan Redpath is Jesus Christ. And I repeat that same thing. The only good thing about Charles Price is Jesus Christ.

If I believe anything different to that, I am allowing myself to be seduced and sucked by something I think is good. What Saul does, you see, is generally speaking, all right, I'll attack the Malachites, but I'm going to pick off those things that are good, the best of the sheep, the best of the cattle. And Samuel says, what is this lowing of the cattle, if you have obeyed the law? What is this bleating of the sheep that I hear? What are these sounds of life where God demanded death? And maybe in your life and my life, there is a Christian who has, we brought our lives.

You wouldn't be here this morning if we hadn't brought our lives under the lordship of Christ. But what are those things in your life, those probably secret things you've locked away, I've kept it, this is good. Maybe not a good thing, but good, I enjoy it.

This is my favorite sin, it's my secret sin. You know, he talks about sexual immorality, impurity, lust, those three are all self-indulgent, it's not sexual desire, that's something good, but lust is self-oriented, all built around satisfying me, looking after my needs. He says, this is idolatry, who's the idol, you are the idol.

Let's not kid ourselves that these are not our temptations, they're my temptations, and they'll be your temptations. Temptation is common to man, the question is not, are these temptations something we face, the question is, are we putting them to death? Put to death therefore, says Paul, these things in your life. Have we made that covenant with our eyes that Job talks about, I made a covenant with my eyes not to look on a woman.

He didn't say I'm not interested in women, he didn't say I'm never tempted by a woman, but I made a covenant that when I am, I turn away. That's why Jesus said, by the way, in Matthew chapter 5, you remember, he said, if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out, throw it away. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

Now he's not talking about mutilating the body, but bringing the body under control, and the context is always important, the context of that statement is, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart, and then he says, if your eye leads you to sin, gouge it out. If your hand leads you to sin, cut it off. Let me be very, very frank for a moment.

The agents of sexual arousal are sight and touch, and in the context of talking of lusting, he says, what are you looking at and what are you doing with your hands? Gouge out your eye, cut it off. Put the blocks on your computer or get rid of it, if you can't close your eye to those things that are going to seduce you. And

you see, we live in a day, of course, when this is unreasonable, we ought to be free to just be ourselves.

And you might be thinking to yourself, this doesn't apply to me, I wouldn't be at a conference on revival if it did. Don't kid yourself. That's exactly what Saul says, because Saul is shocked.

No, no, no, no, I've obeyed the law. Yeah, generally speaking, but you kept a line. If I might say this, if the person is here, I'm sure you won't mind me mentioning this, there's no identity, but I've already had a conversation this week with a man in this conference in a sexual relationship with a woman who's not his wife, and he said, why is it wrong when we love each other? He's kept what looks good.

Saul's reasoning in verse 20 is, I did obey the law. Now, by the way, when we begin to strut around as, yeah, I am spiritual, yes, I'm godly, you can be pretty sure you're not, because the godly person knows their hearts. So the moment this self-justification surfaces, you know that in itself is indicative something is wrong inside.

I did obey the law, Saul said. I went on the mission the law assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag, their king.

That's a contradiction in terms anyway. I completely destroyed them, but kept Agag alive. He's the king, good for intelligence about where other Amalekites might be, because there were various, as I mentioned, various pockets of them.

And then, of course, he passes the buck, verse 21, the soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God. And here's why, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord, your God, we kept these things because God can use this. God can use my adulterous relationship.

God can use my cheating because I can give more money away because I've stolen more. You laugh. I know a man in Toronto who's on trial right now, a Christian leader, for obtaining money deceitfully, hundreds of thousands of dollars.

You can kid yourself. I can up my tithes if I cheat a bit more. But the best of what God has condemned is condemned, whether it looks the best of, or it looks good, as he said.

I mean, the words used, the best of, all that was good. But by whose estimation? Saul's estimation. We have to be ruthless in bringing our minds under the scrutiny and the authority of the word of God, not what looks good.

Well, in our day and age, and actually this was said to me, I mentioned that gentleman I talked to, this was said to me, in our day and age, isn't it unreasonable to expect celibacy? Of course it is in our day and age. But we're dealing with a God who's transcendent over our day and age. Isn't God being a bit extreme here? This is what Saul implies.

And this was put to me this week. Isn't this sexual prohibition of marriage mainly for young people? Not for older people? Well, that would be fun if it was, wouldn't it? Until you're 30. No, unless you're married.

After 30? I guess you can handle it. It's amazing how we can rationalize our sin. You know, a wise man said, when you're dealing with sin in the life of Christians, when leaders fall, he said, the ones that you won't do much for, the people who will tell you, I've put this right with God, why are you probing in things that God has forgiven? No.

He said, you won't get much, you won't get far with those people. You're dealing with people who say, I have sinned, I'm unworthy, I'm resigning. Then there's hope.

I'll tell you a giveaway thing in what Saul says. He says it twice. He says, for instance, in verse 15, the soldiers brought them from the Amalekites, they spared the best of the sheep and the cattle, to sacrifice to the Lord your God.

Not the Lord our God. Saul now has divorced himself from God and he doesn't realize it. It's snuck out in the thing he says.

To sacrifice the Lord your God. No, no. In Romans 7 it talks about you and your God.

They've lost touch themselves. I wonder what it is that you and I, you and I ask myself, what are we holding on to that God has condemned? What is it that, as Colossians 3 says, and it gives that list of things, which is idolatry? It's all about me and about self-expression and self-satisfaction. Am I holding on to lust? I don't mean you won't be sexually tempted, but I feed it.

Am I holding on to greed? Am I holding on to my reputation? You know, those of us in Christian ministry, some of you in Christian ministry, we better recognize that when Jesus made himself of no reputation, in other words, he didn't care what people thought about him, you better not be interested in your reputation. You can't help but have one, but don't be interested in it. Because if you become interested in your reputation, you'll start to want to maintain your reputation.

You want to create your reputation. You want to enhance it. You want to protect it.

Now, be of no reputation. But these are things, you see, which are idolatry, and these are some of the temptations, and because some of us are in Christian ministry, we are exposed to these temptations. What are the sounds of life where God has sentenced death in your own private life, in your home life, in your work, in your church? If you're not sure what sin is, and some of us don't, let me read you the wise words of Susanna Wesley, the mother of John Wesley, and he says that this is how she defined sin to John when he was a boy.

I quote, whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, and takes off the relish of spiritual things, that for you is sin. You can say, what's wrong with this program? That's not the question. Does it take off the relish of spiritual things in your own heart? Does it weaken your conscience? And the conscience is a very sensitive thing.

We haven't time to talk about this, but follow through with the scripture about conscience. It talks about those who have ruined their conscience, who have destroyed their conscience, who pierce themselves with many pains, and what's so rationalized as good are the things that God had condemned, and that's when Samuel says, does the Lord delight in burnt offerings? You say you can offer to God offerings. Does he delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice.

To heed, that is to do what you're told, is better than the fat of these rams, which you think these are waste destroying these rams that you use them to sacrifice to God. And the particular subtlety of Saul's downfall here is not that it was rank disobedience. He justified what he'd done.

But the particular subtlety of it, it was selective obedience. It was obedient to a point. But I exercise the right of veto over this, and I exercise the veto over that, and I say, Lord, this thing in my life, it's too big for me, so I'm just going to live with it, and I'm going to stuck it in the corner, and I'm going to keep it because I enjoy it anyway.

But I'm going to obey you in other ways. We're going to know the blessing of God. If we're going to see revival, we've got to be merciless with sin, merciless with self-indulgence.

And here are the consequences in verse 23, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you. Again, in verse 26, you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you. And you know Saul is stricken by this because in verse 24, Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned.

I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. You know, there's a repentance that comes from integrity with God, and there's a repentance that comes from being found out. Most decent people say sorry when they're caught red-handed.

Most decent people do. Christians caught in a sin nearly always are sorry. Sorry for what? You got caught.

Oh, and then we can shed the tears, and then we can say all the right things, and then we can, oh, I should never have done this, I know. Well, you only say that because you got caught. You've been gone for two years or five years.

God's never fooled by that. When Samuel said, I have sinned, God didn't say, oh, hallelujah. Hey, Samuel, when Saul said that, rather, Samuel, take that back.

I'm not going to reject him after all. He just said he's sorry. He's confessed, so whoop, let's put him back on the throne.

Now, God's not naive. Don't worry. It was Samuel who put Agag to death.

But you know why this is so important? I hope this will make your hair stand on end, why this is so important. It's not just because God is fussy. Years later, Samuel died in a battle with the Philistines on Mount Gilbar.

And 1 Samuel 31 tells us a story that he was wounded. His son Jonathan and his son Abinadab were killed in the battle. And he said to his armor bearer, finish me off with your sword and kill me.

And the armor bearer, understandably, was afraid to do that, so he didn't. And it says that he fell on his own sword. But when you go into 2 Samuel 1, which is the next chapter, it gives us a bit of detail that 1 Samuel 31 doesn't give us, and it's this.

Let me read you the fact that a man comes to David with a report of Saul's death. Let me read you from verse 4. What happened, David asked. Tell me.

He said, the men fled from the battle, many of them fell and died, and Saul and his son Jonathan are dead. Then David said to the young man who brought him this report, how do you know that Saul and his son Jonathan are dead? I happen to be on Mount Gilbar, the young man said, and there was Saul leaning on his spear. He fell on his spear, it says, and committed suicide.

Well, he's leaning on his spear. Maybe he's obviously not yet dead. Maybe he had tried to at this stage, but this young man comes along, there's Saul leaning on his spear with the chariots and the riders almost upon him.

When he turned around and saw me, he called out to me, and I said, what can I do? And he asked me, who are you? Listen to this. I'm an Amalekite, I answered. He said, stand over me and kill me.

I'm in the throes of death, but I'm still alive. So I stood over him, and I took the crown that was on his head. Here's Saul, years later, wounded, almost dead, and popping up on the battlefield, there's this young man, who are you? I'm an Amalekite.

The one Saul was supposed to have killed. Utterly destroyed. He kept the vest alive.

And what Saul refused to destroy came back to destroy him. And I took the crown off his head, said the Amalekite. Who put the crown on Saul's head? God did.

Who took it off? The Amalekite, who should have been destroyed years before, came back to destroy. Revelation 311, the Lord Jesus says to the church in Philadelphia, let no one take your crown. Sin will take your crown.

You see, sin never hits you overnight with its consequences. You hold on to something, and it seems harmless. You think, this is good.

I can handle this. And it grows, and it grows, and you kid yourself about the seriousness of sin. Until the thing that you've kept alive, you have not declared war on, will, at the right moment, come and put the sword through you, and kill you, and take your crown.

Destroy you. This is not our subject and points now, because we're going to finish in a few moments. But you know, David is a wonderful contrast to Saul.

Saul is a tragedy. David had his own mess-ups, of course. But do you remember when David went to meet Goliath, a young man? Goliath was a giant, dressed in armor.

David had just a sling and five stones. Goliath, when David came to meet him, laughed and mocked and insulted him. David said this, I was out on the hillside, looking after my father's sheep, and a bear came.

If I'm looking after my father's sheep, if I'm a shepherd, I better be a good shepherd. And if that bear gets one of my sheep, it'll be back for another. So God enabled me to slay the bear.

Then a lion came. If I'm going to be a shepherd of my father's sheep, I'm going to be a good shepherd. If that lion gets one sheep, I might get the rest and take them home, but like a fox that comes back for the chickens, the lion will come back for another sheep.

So God enabled me and I slew the lion. In other words, out on the hillside, with no audience to impress. His father, Jesse, probably would have said to him, hey, if you ever see a lion, bring the sheep home.

Don't mess with a lion. David said, he said this to Saul actually, a God who delivered me from the lion, a God who delivered me from the bear, would deliver me from this giant. In other words, in the secret, private world, I have proved God.

Now in the public domain with two armies looking on, with a man twice my size, the God I've proved in secret, I'll experience in public. Saul is the opposite. Saul kept alive the things that he thought didn't matter.

They were little things. Yeah, I've obeyed, we've destroyed the Amalekites, except we kept alive the best, what is good. And because Saul disobeyed in the little areas, that disobedience came back to destroy him.

Because David obeyed and trusted God in the little things, God was there in the big things for David. Glad, he said, you cut me with sword and spear. I come to the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and this day he will give you into my hands.

Don't be unimpressed with my sling and my stone, and don't be impressed with my sling and my stone. That's not your issue, Goliath, it's God. Why? Because out on the hillside when nobody was looking, I proved him and I experienced him, in little areas, relatively.

I mean, I wouldn't like to fight a lion, but little consequences. Get the sheep home, don't worry about the lion. No, I worry about the lion.

And he proved God. But you see, these things didn't just stop there, as they never do. The story of sin, like a virus, goes on spreading its evil work.

Do you know how much Saul's sin grew long after his own lifetime? Do you remember the story of Esther? Remember the story of Esther is about a man called Haman who tried to destroy all the Jews in the Persian Empire? He was the Adolf Hitler of his day. You read Esther chapter three, verse one. It says, now Haman was an Amalekite.

The NIV, which I have, says an Agagite, Agag. Agag was the king that Saul kept alive. Other translations say the Amalekite.

Centuries later, when the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem, King Herod, being given wind of this by some people we call wise men, but they were unwise wise men because they came to his palace and said, where's the new king? That's not a smart thing to do. To come and ask the king where the new king is. So Herod resolved to destroy every child in Bethlehem under the age of two in order to destroy the Messiah.

Do you know Herod what? You find he was an Edomian and the Edomians were Amalekites. You can be sure, you see, that if you do not declare war on sin in your life, if you keep in one area of your life that sin which you want to keep, it's your favorite, you feel out of control anyway, so it's there, you can be sure that will come back, not as your friend, but it will come back to destroy you. I remember years ago reading about a circus act in Italy and there was a well-known performer who bred snakes and reptiles, he performed with them.

The climax of his act was this python, pythons don't stop growing, and this python, 15, 17 feet, and he would have this python do all kinds of things and people would be sitting there in the audience, you know, python. And the climax of his act was the python would wrap itself around him until he stood in the center of the ring, just a coil of python, looking like, you know, the Michelin man. Then the performer would give the signal that he had trained the python to respond to and he would unravel and slither across the ring and then they would break out on the floor.

One day, he came to the climax of his act, and this python wrapped itself around him, people sat there in silence, and suddenly the crowd heard a crack, and then another crack, and they noticed the muscles of this python contracting, pythons are constrictive. Employees of the circus realized something was going wrong, they ran into the ring and they actually killed the python, but not before the python had crashed and killed the man. The article I read said this man was an expert with snakes, he'd gone to Africa and he'd taken this python from Africa when he was just an inch or two long, it had lived with him the whole time, it had lived in his pocket, it had slept in his bed, he'd taken it with him everywhere so the python would think he was another python with a few extra knobs on.

And he trained that python. And I thought, how interesting, when he got hold of that little python, it was small enough to take his head between his finger and thumb and it could have crashed its head like that. But he kept it, he played with it, he trained it, he subdued it, he thought, but he forgot it's a python.

And one day the python crashed him. This is a tragedy of soul. He kept alive what he should have crashed and it crashed him.

Let's not be naive, we're here this morning, this is a conference on revival, but some of us know, as I'm speaking, you know that things in your life you've never crashed, you've never dealt with, you've never brought to the cross, I don't pretend that they just disappear out of your life, but you declare war on them, and you know, as Paul said in Romans 8, put to death therefore by the spirit, not in human strength, the things of the flesh. As Moses told the Gadites and the Reubenites in Numbers 32 when he was rebuking them, you may be sure your sin will find you out. You may say, well it's been five years, no one knows yet, just wait.

Because your sin is not your friend. The sin you have tamed and hidden away and locked in the corner of your life is not your friend, it's your enemy. And it will, when it has the moment, put the sword in you as it did in Saul.

And some of the saddest words in the Bible, 1 Samuel 16 verse 1, the Lord said to Samuel, how long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Samuel, don't mourn for Saul, don't waste your emotional energy on a man who played around with me. Let him go. Saul had every chance in the world, his family could have occupied the throne of Israel forever.

You know today, the star of David flies over the nation of Israel, it could have been the flag of Saul. But God said, I'll find a man after my own heart, and he'll enjoy the blessing that should have been for Saul. I want to hear this morning, do you need, do I need to go back to God? I'm preaching to myself, I woke up very early this morning and spent time in this, saying Lord, this is my life under scrutiny here.

I can become very tolerant of sin in my own life. You know, it's very easy too in an event like this, we get in the habit of criticizing the rest of Christianity because the church is in a mess. The danger with that is it can make us feel a little bit smug.

And it's we who are in need. You may remember in Isaiah chapter 5, and I am finishing now, but in Isaiah chapter 5, Isaiah has a message, and he says, woe to you, Isaiah 5 verse 8, verse 11, woe to those who rise early in the morning for after their drinks and stay up late at night. Woe to those, verse 18, who draw sin along with cords of deceit.

Woe to those who are evil, who call evil good and good evil. Verse 20, verse 22, woe to those who hear us are drinking wine, etc. Now Isaiah 5, Isaiah's message is woe to those, woe to those, woe to them, woe to you, and then do you know what happens? In Isaiah 6, he goes into the temple and I saw the Lord seat on the throne high and lifted up, the train of his robe filled the temple, the seraphs were singing, holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, the earth is full of his glory, the sound of their voices, the doorposts and threshold shook, and the temple was filled with smoke.

Do you know what Isaiah said? Woe to me! You read Isaiah carefully. From Isaiah 6 on, it's a different message. He starts as a man called by God, a little bit pompous, a little bit self smug, I'm doing well with God, woe to them, woe to them, woe to them, woe to them.

It's the easiest thing in the world to do. When God deals with you, that's not your message anymore. It's woe to me.

Woe is me. I am ruined. I'm a man of unclean lips.

That's the man that God then commissions him. Go and tell this people because you have the right to tell the people when you yourself are broken before God and you know the wickedness of your own heart. Then you can talk to others with authority.

That's why the spirit of God in these days is dealing with many of us. We bring our lines open, laid bare before him with whom we have to do. We know if any man says he has no sin, he deceives himself.

So we're not kidding ourselves. We know that the victories of today have to be received tomorrow again and again the next day and again the next day and the battle that we're in against that old flesh, the world and the devil is a battle we fight every day in the strength to be strong in his strength and his mighty power. It's in the strength of God we fight it but we fight it but we declare war on it.

And yes, at times we fall, we confess and we're forgiven when we confess. But it's when we hold on and we keep alive the best of what we think is okay. The best of what is good will come back with a sword and so it'll destroy you.

And it did and it will. Ten years from now, 15 years from now, 20 years from now, some of us will be out of the church and out of the fellowship of God. The sins have already taken place unless you declare war.

In repentance towards God and in repentance towards God then obedience is better than sacrifice. Bring in every part of your life under the scrutiny of God and say, God, here is my area of last. I don't know what to do about it but it's there.

I bring it to you. I give it to you. Here's my area of greed.

Here's my insecurity expressed in my desire for reputation and forgive me, I bring it to you. I want to be of no reputation, not care what people think about me. Only care that I please the Father.

And in the frailty of our own lives and we're frail, God will work and God will bless us. David, we know his messes too. But God works for him because Psalm 51 tells us why.

He didn't cover up. He exposed himself. He exposed his heart.

He exposed his weakness. He exposed his lust. God said, thank you.

There's nothing about you that takes me by surprise. I know how wicked you are. But if you give that to me, I'll work in you too.

Victory is not won, it's received. So it will be in your life and mine. I don't know how the Holy Spirit of God has spoken to you this morning.

That's his prerogative. It's not my prerogative to manipulate you into anything or in any way whatsoever. It's to expose you to the truth of the Word of God, so that the Spirit of God might lead us into a deeper repentance and a deeper, honest confession and a declaration of war on those things that we're to put to death.

Let's pray together. Maybe some of us need to, at the end of this meeting, go into the prayer room, which is on my left, your right at the front here. I believe there are people there who will pray with you.

Maybe you just need to spend time with God alone. Maybe you need somebody to help you, to talk to. It's sometimes good to confess our sins one to another.

Because in so doing, we really do expose them. We bring them out of the darkness in which we're keeping them. If God has spoken to you this morning, if God has exposed your heart this morning, don't hope you'll get over it in the next 20 minutes.

Allow God to do the deep work of cleansing and putting to death those things that would otherwise destroy you. Lord, we come to you this morning together. I know my heart.

I know the wickedness that lies in my heart. I know how deceptively it camouflages itself sometimes as something noble. It looks good.

I enjoy it. I pray, Lord, we'll allow you to strip it of its disguise and we see our sin for what it is and we understand your verdict on it and we bring our lives under your lordship and obedience and recognizing we cannot live apart from in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. Lord, fill us with yourself.

I pray there'll be those here this morning who might know a fresh victory. Give them the courage to confess to you but to one another too that we may be cleansed and empowered that our lives may become an exhibition of the presence of Jesus as you fill us with yourself. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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