

CHAPTER 15

In this chapter we have the final rejection of Saul from being king, for his disobedience to God's command in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By his wars and victories he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but, by his mismanagement of them, he ruined himself, and laid his honour in the dust. Here is,

- I.** The commission God gave him to destroy the Amalekites, with a command to do it utterly (v. 1-3).
- II.** Saul's preparation for this expedition (v. 4-6).
- III.** His success, and partial execution of this commission (v. 7-9).
- IV.** His examination before Samuel, and sentence passed upon him, notwithstanding the many frivolous pleas he made to excuse himself (v. 10-31).
- V.** The slaying of Agag (v. 32, 33).
- VI.** Samuel's final farewell to Saul (v. 34, 35).

1 SAMUEL 15:1-9

THE AMALEKITES DESTROYED

Here,

I. Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or no, v. 1. And the making of this so expressly the trial of his obedience did very much aggravate his disobedience.

1. He reminds him of what God had done for him: "*The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be a king.* God gave thee thy power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over

Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause and avenge their quarrels. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel and must be commanded by him." Men's preferment, instead of releasing them from their obedience to God, obliges them so much the more to it. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be sent with these orders to him.

2. He tells him, in general, that, in consideration of this, whatever God commanded him to do he was bound to do it: *Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord.* Note, God's favours to us lay strong obligations upon us to be obedient to him. This we must render, ^{<B612>}Psalm 116:12.

II. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now show his obedience to God more than in any thing he had done yet. Samuel premises God's authority to the command: *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts.* He also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard: *I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, v. 2.* God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel when he brought them out of Egypt. We have the story, ^{<D178>}Exodus 17:8, etc., and the crime is aggravated, ^{<B2518>}Deuteronomy 25:18. He basely smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God. God then swore that he would have *war with Amalek from generation to generation*, and that in process of time he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek; this is the work that Saul is now appointed to do (v. 3): "*Go and smite Amalek.* Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full; now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation." He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, *man and woman, infant and suckling*, and not spare them out of pity; also *ox and sheep, camel and ass*, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note,

1. Injuries done to God's Israel will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them when they are coming out of Egypt.

2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence passed is not executed speedily.

3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompence for the controversy of Israel will come at last. Though divine justice strikes slowly it strikes surely.

4. The longer judgment is delayed many times the more severe it is when it comes.

5. God chooses out instruments to do his work that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul who was a rough and severe man must do it.

III. Saul hereupon musters his forces, and makes a descent upon the country of Amalek. It was an immense army that he brought into the field (v. 4): 200,000 *footmen*. When he came to engage the Philistines, and the success was hazardous, he had but 600 attending him, ^{<01315>}1 Samuel 13:15. But now that he was to attack the Amalekites by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But, whatever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah that their forces were numbered by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short (whatever was the reason), but a twentieth part of the whole, for they were by 10,000, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field 200,000. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but had not yet come. Saul numbered them in *Telaim*, which signifies *lambs*. He numbered them *like lambs* (so the vulgar Latin), numbered them *by the paschal lambs* (so the Chaldee), allowing ten to a lamb, a way of numbering used by the Jews in the later times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the *city of Amalek*, that city that was their metropolis (v. 5), that he might provoke them to give him battle.

IV. He gave friendly advice to the Kenites to separate themselves from the Amalekites among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, v. 6. Herein he did prudently and piously, and, it is probable, according to the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy for them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated. Many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for *they put their nest in a rock*, being hardy people that could live any where, and affected fastnesses, ^{<0121>}Numbers 24:21. Balaam had foretold that they should be wasted, ^{<0122>}Numbers 24:22. However, Saul must not waste them. But, 1. He acknowledges the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and this is remembered to their posterity many

ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children; those that come after us may be reaping the benefit of our good works when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindnesses shown to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, *and recompensed in the resurrection of the just. I was hungry, and you gave me meat.* God's remembering the kindness of the Kenites' ancestors in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done by the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns? He espouses his people's cause, so as to *bless those that bless them*; and therefore so as to *curse those that curse them*, ^{<621>}Numbers 24:9; ^{<612>}Genesis 12:3. They cannot themselves requite the kindnesses nor avenge the injuries done them, but God will do both.

2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites: *Go, depart, get you down from among them.* When destroying judgments are abroad God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is dangerous being found in the company of God's enemies, and it is our duty and interest to *come out from among them*, lest we share in their sins and plagues, ^{<618>}Revelation 18:4. The Jews have a saying, *Woe to the wicked man and woe to his neighbour.*

V. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condemned malefactors than a war with contending enemies. The issue could not be dubious when the cause was just and the call so clear: *He smote them* (v. 7), *utterly destroyed them*, v. 8. Now they paid dearly for the sin of their ancestors. God sometimes *lays up iniquity for the children.* They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to fall under the wrath of God; yet, when God would reckon with them, he fastened upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, How unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestable is thy righteousness!

VI. Yet he did his work by halves, v. 9.

1. He *spared Agag*, because he was a king like himself, and perhaps in hope to get a great ransom for him.

2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this; but that could not be helped. It was Saul's fault that he did not destroy such as came to his hands and were in his power. That which was now destroyed was in effect sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth; and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean, good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields and his own table the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

<0950> 1 SAMUEL 15:10-23

SAUL REJECTED OF GOD

Saul is here called to account by Samuel concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

I. What passed between God and Samuel, in secret, upon this occasion, v. 10, 11.

1. God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it: *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.* Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method or dispensation. He does not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul: *He has turned back from following me;* this construction God put upon the partiality of his obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom and the honour and power that belonged to it: but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; these gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

2. Samuel laments and deprecates it. *It grieved Samuel* that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off; and he *cried unto the Lord all night*, spent a whole night in interceding for him, that this decree might not go forth against him. When others were in their

beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government; nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been, that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but on the contrary prayed earnestly for his establishment, so far was he from desiring that woeful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people; God delights not in their death, nor should we.

II. What passed between Samuel and Saul in public. Samuel, being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, in *bitterness of soul*, to meet him, perhaps according to an appointment when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul had come to Gilgal (v. 12), the place where he was made king (~~1~~¹ Samuel 11:15), and were now he would have been confirmed if he had approved himself well in the trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had set up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory, at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or *hand*, as the word is) for himself (he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God than boasting of his victory), and also that he had marched in great state to Gilgal, for this seems to be intimated in the manner of expression: *He has gone about, and passed on, and gone down*, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting, and,

1. Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself (v. 13): “*Blessed be thou of the Lord*, for thou sendest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and *I have performed the commandment of the Lord.*” It is very likely, if his conscience had now flown in his face at this time and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his disobedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being *judged of the Lord*; whereas the only way to do that is by *judging ourselves*. Those that boast most of their religion may be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

2. Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. “Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? *What means then the bleating of the sheep?*” v. 14. Saul would needs have it thought that God Almighty was wonderfully beholden to him for the good service he had

done; but Samuel shows him that God was so far from being a debtor to him that he had just cause of action against him, and produces for evidence the *bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen*, which perhaps Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appears to them as witnesses against him. He needed not go far to disprove his professions. The noise the cattle made (like the *rust of silver*, ~~SUBB~~ James 5:3) would be a *witness against him*. Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God; but what mean then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them?

3. Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, v. 15. The fact he cannot deny; the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But,

(1.) It was not his fault, for *the people spared them*; as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any rather than take it to themselves. Sin is a brat that nobody cares to have laid at his doors. It is the sorry subterfuge of an impenitent heart, that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame on those that were tempters, or partners, or only followers in it.

(2.) It was with a good intention: “It was *to sacrifice to the Lord thy God*. He is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this is, for his honour.” This was a false plea, for both Saul and the people designed their own profit in sparing the cattle. But, if it had been true, it would still have been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering. God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself has prescribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

4. Samuel overrules, or rather overlooks, his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premises his authority. What he was about to say was what the Lord had said to him (v. 16), otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain that their ministers are too harsh with them should

remember that, while they keep to the word of God, they are but messengers, and must say as they are bidden, and therefore be willing, as Saul himself here was, that they should *say on*. Samuel delivers his message faithfully.

(1.) He reminds Saul of the honour of God had done him in making him king (v. 17), *when he was little in his own sight*. God regarded the lowness of his state and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth ought often to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that had advanced them.

(2.) He lays before him the plainness of the orders he was to execute (v. 18): *The Lord sent thee on a journey*; so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather to be called a *journey* than a *war*. The work was honourable, to destroy the sworn enemies of God and Israel; and had he denied himself, and set aside the consideration of his own profit so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he would have been no loser by it at last, nor have gone this *warfare on his own charges*. God would no doubt have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore,

(3.) He shows him how inexcusable he was in aiming to make a profit of this expedition, and to enrich himself by it (v. 19): *“Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil, and convert that to thy own use which was to have been destroyed for God’s honour?”* See what evil the love of money is the root of; but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord. It is disobedience: *Thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord*.

5. Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, v. 20, 21. He denies the charge (v. 20): *“Yea, I have obeyed, I have done all I should do;”* for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself. God bade him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience that he brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God’s commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it that he has *utterly destroyed the Amalekites* themselves, which was the main thing intended; but, as to the spoil, he owns it should have been *utterly destroyed*; so that he knew his *Lord’s will*, and was under

no mistake about the command. But he thought that would be wilful waste; the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time (^{<4813>}Numbers 31:32, etc.), and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be prey to the Israelites than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people's carrying it away. But it was their doing and not his; and, besides, it was for *sacrifice to the Lord* here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience of their sin and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

6. Samuel gives a full answer to his apology, since he did insist upon it, v. 22, 23. He appeals to his own conscience: *Has the Lord as great delight in sacrifices as in obedience?* Though Saul was not a man of any great acquaintance with religion, yet he could not but know this,

(1.) That nothing is so pleasing to God as obedience, no, not sacrifice and offering, and the fat of rams. See here what we should seek and aim at in all the exercises of religion, even acceptance with God, that he may delight in what we do. If God be well pleased with us and our services, we are happy, we have gained our point, but otherwise *to what purpose is it?* ^{<3011>}Isaiah 1:11. Now here we are plainly told that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than all *burnt-offerings and sacrifices*. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances, ^{<3016>}Micah 6:6-8; ^{<3016>}Hosea 6:6. Obedience is enjoyed by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice only by a positive law. Obedience was the law of innocency, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified and self more denied by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burnt upon the altar than to bring *every high thought into obedience* to God and the will subject to his will. Obedience is the glory of angels (^{<19A30>}Psalm 103:20), and it will be ours.

(2.) That nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our will in competition with his. This is here called *rebellion* and *stubbornness*, and is said to be as bad as *witchcraft* and *idolatry*, v. 23. It is as bad to set up other gods as to live in disobedience to the true God. Those that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations, in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the *teraphim* (as the word here

is for idolatry) or the diviners. It was disobedience that made us all sinners (~~459~~Romans 5:19), and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the *transgression of the law*, and consequently it is *enmity to God*, ~~480~~Romans 8:7. Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God, that this text speaks of.

7. He reads his doom: in short, “*Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, hast despised it* (so the Chaldee), *hast made nothing of it* (so the Septuagint), *hast cast off the government of it, therefore he has rejected thee, despised and made nothing of thee, but cast thee off from being king.* He that made thee king has determined to unmake thee again.” Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men who are not willing that God should rule over them.

~~0152~~ 1 SAMUEL 15:24-31

SAUL'S DETHRONEMENT FORETOLD

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of the penitent; but it is too evident that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed. Observe,

I. How poorly he expressed his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed. This touched him in a tender part. Then he began to relent, and not till then. When Samuel told him he was *rejected from being king*, then he said, *I have sinned*, v. 24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous, but extorted by the rack, and forced from him. We observe here several bad signs of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of bribe to him, he puts it into his confession: *I have transgressed the commandment of the*

Lord and thy word; as if he had been in God's stead, v. 24. David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet, in his confession, has his eye to God alone, not to Nathan. ~~1504~~ Psalm 51:4 *Against thee only have I sinned*. But Saul, ignorantly enough, confesses his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the *commandment of the Lord*. He also applies to Samuel for forgiveness (v. 25): *I pray thee, pardon my sin*; as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves who, when they have fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the show and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul is to suppose that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him. However, it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent (v. 24): *I did it because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice*. We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doing and not the people's; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them and did not stand in any awe of them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous; whatever he pretended, he did not really fear the people. But it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove; but they forget that God searchest the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him. Therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness (v. 25) to turn again with him, and assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory. Very importunate he was in this matter when he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle to detain him (v. 27), not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared that if Samuel forsook him the people would do so too. Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said (v. 30), *I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people*. Is this the language of a penitent? No, but the contrary: *"I have sinned, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can*

loathe me so much as I loathe myself.” Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul! It is very common for those who are convicted of sin to show themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent can pretend to no other than that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

II. How little he got by these thin shows of repentance. What point did he gain by them?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence passed upon him, so far was he from giving any hopes of the repeal of it, v. 26, the same with 5:23. *He that covers his sins shall never prosper,* ⁽¹⁸¹³⁾ Proverbs 28:13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but *turned about to go away*, v. 27. As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory which was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterwards he did turn again with him (v. 31), upon further thoughts, and probably by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people or perhaps not to do honour to Saul (for, though Saul worshipped the Lord, v. 31, it is not said Samuel presided in that worship), but to do justice on Agag, v. 32.

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him he tore his clothes to detain him (v. 27), so loth was he to part with the prophet; but Samuel put a construction upon this accident which none but a prophet could do. He made it to signify the *rending of the kingdom* from him (v. 28), and that, like this, was his own doing. “He hath rent it from thee, and given it to a neighbour better than thou,” namely, to David, who afterwards, upon occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe (⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾1 Samuel 24:4), upon which Saul said (⁽¹²⁰⁴⁾1 Samuel 24:20), *I know that thou shalt surely be king*, perhaps remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible (v. 29): *The Strength of Israel will not lie*. The *Eternity* or *Victory of Israel*, so some read it; *the holy One*, so the Arabic; *the most noble One*, so the Syriac; the *triumphant King of Israel*, so bishop Patrick. “He is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose. *He is not a man that should*

repent.” Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens which they could not foresee, by which their measures are broken. But with God it is not so. God has sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done, repentance was hidden from Saul, and therefore hidden from God's eyes.

~~0952~~ 1 SAMUEL 15:32-35

AGAG SLAIN

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, ~~2010~~Jeremiah 1:10.

I. He destroys king Agag, doubtless by such special direction from heaven as none now can pretend to. He *hewed Agag in pieces*. Some think he only ordered it to be done; or perhaps he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice (v. 33), and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this,

1. How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated: He *came delicately*, in a stately manner, to show that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect, or in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that *could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy* (~~4386~~Deuteronomy 28:56), to move compassion: and he said, “Surely, now that the heat of the battle is over, *the bitterness of death is past*, v. 32. Having escaped the sword of Saul,” that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, and old prophet, a man of peace. Note,

(1.) There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. *Surely death is bitter*, so divers versions read those words of Agag; as the Septuagint read the former clause, *He came trembling*. Death will dismay the stoutest heart.

(2.) Many think the bitterness of death is past when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them which is very near. True believers may, through grace, say this, upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is. *O death! where is thy sting?*

2. How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins: *Thy*

sword has made women childless, v. 33. He trod in the steps of his ancestors' cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek required of this generation, ^{<41236>}Matthew 23:36. Agag, that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others. It is commonly so: those who are indulgent in their appetites are not less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for; even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed or cause to be shed. It was that crime of king Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, ^{<2244>}2 Kings 24:4. See ^{<6130>}Revelation 13:10.

II. He deserts king Saul, takes leave of him (v. 34), and *never came any more to see him* (v. 35), to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him. Though he might sometimes see him accidentally (as ^{<49212>}1 Samuel 29:24), yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he *mourned for Saul*, thinking it a very lamentable thing that a man who stood so fair for great things should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the bad state of the country, to which Saul was likely to have been so great a blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance. When he wept for him, it is likely, he made supplication, but the Lord had *repented that he had made Saul king*, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, We must mourn for the rejection of sinners,

1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to *weep day and night for them*, ^{<2401>}Jeremiah 9:1, 2.

2. Though they do not mourn for themselves. Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure which he lay under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.