

# 1 Samuel 15:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

## Analysis

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**And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.**

Saul's defense reveals deepening self-deception: 'Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD.' He insists on his obedience despite Samuel's confrontation. His evidence: 'have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.' Each claim is technically true yet collectively false. He went on the mission, captured Agag, and destroyed most Amalekites - but bringing Agag alive and keeping livestock violated the core command. Partial obedience claims full credit.

## Historical Context

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Saul's defense strategy - listing what he did accomplish - reflects a transactional understanding of obedience. Ancient Near Eastern vassal treaties, however, required complete compliance. Partial fulfillment of a suzerain's command was still rebellion.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does listing partial accomplishments obscure fundamental failure?
2. What is the difference between obedience that satisfies us and obedience that satisfies God?

## Interlinear Text

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בֶּקֶר וּלְ שָׁמַע עֲתִי אֲשֶׁר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל שָׁא וּלְ וַיֹּאמֶר  
said And Saul H413 unto Samuel H834 Yea I have obeyed the voice  
H559 H7586 H8050 H8085 H6963

יְהוָה הַ שְׁלַח נִי אֲשֶׁר בִּדְרֹךְ וְאֵל הַ יְהוָה הַ  
of the LORD H1980 the way H834 sent of the LORD  
H3068 H1870 H7971 H3068

עָמַל קָ וְאֵת עָמַל קָ מֶלֶךְ אֲגַג אֶת וְאֶבְיָא  
me and have brought H853 Agag the king of Amalek H853 of Amalek  
H935 H90 H4428 H6002 H6002

וַיִּחָרֶם מְאֹד:  
and have utterly destroyed  
H2763

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Samuel 15:13** (References Lord): And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.

**Romans 10:3** (Parallel theme): For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

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