

The Dangers of Spiritual Compromise

Esther 3:10 (Exodus 17:8-16; Deuteronomy 25:17-19; I Samuel 15) | Notes

I. Introduction

If you know the story of Esther then you know that after being exalted to power (3:1), **"Haman" sets his face to destroy the whole nation of the Jews.**

- Next week we will look into the particular details of the story as it is relayed in chapter three. This week we are going to slow down & digest the **TITLES** which the inspired author of Esther very intentionally ascribed to Haman. He is called both **"the Agagite"** and **"the enemy of the Jews"**. (v10)
- **There is a tremendous amount of BIBLICAL HISTORY standing behind these highly significant titles.** Therefore, if we are going to rightly understand the important lessons being taught through this wonderful book, we need to slow down and make sure that we grasp something of that history.

Haman's exaltation & hell-bent desire to destroy the Jewish nation is **not random**. In fact, **the present crisis can only be blamed on Israel's own sin.**

- *It is Israel's own past disobedience to God's good and holy commandments, as well as their spiritual compromise with the world and its pleasures, that has led them to this dreadful moment wherein the people of God teeter on the edge of total destruction.*
- We tend to think that *some forms of disobedience or of compromise with the world are no big deal.* But **"Haman the Agagite" will show us better.**
- **If we have ears to hear, this story will sharpen our commitment to strive to trust & obey our heavenly Father's commandments in every area of our lives, because we will see that spiritual compromise might look innocent & inconsequential at first, but it can grow up to yield great devastation.**

II. The History That Led To This Present Crisis

"Agagite" refers to the descendants of King Agag (I Sam. 15) who was one of the kings of the Amalekites—perennial enemies of God's covenant people.

- **The history of the Amalekites begins with "Esau" in Genesis 36:12.** Esau was the grandfather of **"Amalek"** from whom this people took their name.
- Like their father Esau, the Amalekites lived for the pleasures of this world. *Their society existed in continual rebellion to both God & his people.*
- **The first recorded manifestation of this ancient animosity is given to us in Exodus 17:8-16.**
- Shortly after Israel had been led by God out of Egypt, it was the Amalekites who were the *first nation to attack them* in the wilderness.
- Moreover, the Amalekites attacked them in a particularly heinous way:
(1) *They were entirely unprovoked.* (2) *They attacked from behind without warning.* (3) *They targeted the elderly, the sickly, the young, & the weak.*
- Even still, through Moses' intercession, (*which was a picture of Jesus' High Priestly ministry for us to come*), Joshua led the people to victory.
- **It was then that God first promised to "utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" & "make war with Amalek forever"** (Ex. 17:14, 16)

This promise of God to **"make war"** with the Amalekites was brought to fulfillment by a **COMMAND** given to his people in **Deuteronomy 25:17-19.**

- As instruments of divine judgment against the wicked for their sins, God called his people to **"blot out the memory of Amalek"** & **"NOT TO FORGET."**
- **There is just one problem: They did "forget".** And by **"forget"** I do not mean they simply failed to remember. I mean **they did not take heed to God's commandment; they did not value it enough to make sure it was kept & fulfilled either by themselves or by their subsequent generations.**

Joshua served the people of God in his own days with great zeal, courage, & devotion. But **JOSHUA DID NOT wipe out the Amalekites** as commanded.

- After Joshua's days, we read in **the book of JUDGES** that *b/c the Amalekites had not been wiped out, they continued to "steal, kill, & destroy."* (Jn. 10:10)
- **In fact, b/c God's people did not fulfill God's command when he told them to, the Amalekites continued to assault them for CENTURIES.** (i.e. Judges 6:3)
- They did this by *joining forces w/ Israel's other enemies* in order to *attack villages & plunder crops.* **The conflict was very bitter & almost constant.**

Finally, in the days of King Saul, **GOD REISSUED THE ORIGINAL COMMAND** which his people had **'FORGOTTEN'** and left **UNDONE: I Samuel 15:2-3.**

- God called Saul to **totally destroy the Amalekites**, including **all persons & even the beasts**, *as an act of divine judgment for their sin & rebellion.* (v18)
- **But once again, GOD'S PEOPLE DID NOT FULLY OBEY GOD'S COMMAND.** Instead, **THEY COMPROMISED ON OBEDIENCE: I Samuel 15:7-9.**
- God's people did **SOME** of what God commanded them, but **NOT ALL.** They **PARTIALLY** obeyed, but **LEFT OFF THE PARTS** of God's commandment that **did not fit their own understanding, or that got in the way of their personal interests and worldly desires.**
- **Thus, instead of fully destroying the Amalekites as God said, they left some alive and perpetuated the centuries-long threat against God's people.**

I Samuel 15:10-11 tells us exactly how God viewed their spiritually compromising behavior:

"I REGRET THAT I HAVE MADE SAUL KING, FOR HE HAS TURNED BACK FROM FOLLOWING ME AND HAS NOT PERFORMED MY COMMANDMENTS."

- Maybe you are thinking: *"Wait a minute! But Saul did mostly obey...he did attack the Amalekites and take out most of them. What's the big deal?"*
- **That is exactly what Saul said.** He tried to argue that *'partial obedience was obedience enough'* and that it should be acceptable to God. (v13, v20)
- **Moreover, Saul even tried to make his disobedience sound spiritual:** *"I only saved the sheep & oxen so that I could sacrifice them to the Lord."*
- **That was a bold-faced lie.** Saul saved the sheep & oxen for his own worldly gain—to enrich himself & to win approval by enriching his people. (v15)
- **God knew this.** And in response to Saul's spiritual compromise he said, *"Has the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings & sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?"* (i.e. *"Do you really think that going through religious motions while rebelling against my commands brings me pleasure?"*)
- **Moreover, God made it clear that SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE IS NOTHING LESS THAN "A REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD" & THEREFORE, A REJECTION OF GOD HIMSELF.** (v23)

How does all of this history connect to "Haman the Agagite" who was attempting to destroy God's covenant people?

What does this ancient disobedience to God's command have to do with the present crisis in the book of Esther?

III. The Meaning of This History

It was this ancient compromise with the world & partial obedience to God's commandment that allowed "Haman the Agagite" to ever rise to power.

- If God's people had been obedient to his command in the days of old, this problem would never have arisen. Haman would never have been born.
- But because God's people negotiated the terms of their obedience and compromised with the world, the seeds of their distrust & rebellion toward God were planted in the ancient soil and eventually grew up to produce a poisonous flower which now threatened to wipe out the whole garden.
- It is the tendency of sinners to say, "I will obey some of what God says but not all" & to say "I will obey part of God's commands but not the whole" that later, as time passed, grew up to produce an existential threat of devastation to God's people beyond what anyone could have ever imagined.

We might say: "Who would have thought that allowing a few random stragglers to escape from Agag's household would ever be such a big deal?"

- Just like we might say: "*What's the big deal about breaking the Sabbath, about telling a lie, about indulging in a little covetousness or worldliness?*"
- But it does not matter what we think might or might not be a big deal, does it? What matters is that we trust & obey our Lord who is holy & wise.
- What matters is that we who profess faith actually walk the walk of faith—which is a walk of glad-submission to God's revealed will in his Word.
- Faith does not fight against God's commands. It embraces them as the wisdom of our Father who loves us & who always commands what is right.
- True faith DOES NOT say: "*How can I keep as much worldly pleasure, comfort, and ease as possible but still make it to heaven?*" (Compromise)
- True faith says: "*How might I walk as nearly to my Savior as possible and obediently honor him with all my heart and all my life?*" (Faithfulness)

IV. The Application of This History To Our Present Walk With God

We tend to think that 'a little disobedience' to some of the 'particulars' of God's commands is NO BIG DEAL. But the book of Esther says otherwise.

1. Esther shows us that spiritual compromise, though it seems small, can yield devastating results beyond anything we might imagine.

- Beloved, let me urge you not make the mistake of thinking that spiritual compromise was only a serious problem for the believers of old, and that it will not have the same effect (or worse) for you & for your children after you today. That would be a grave misjudgment with dreadful consequences.
- Spiritual compromise is NOT a small issue. It is NOT something to overlook or ignore. It is NOT something which we should downplay as unimportant.
- Just as surely as 'a little' adultery is a grievous & devastating offense within a marriage, so any spiritual adultery in our walk w/ Christ is the same.
- There is no such thing as 'a little sin'. That is a lie which Satan wants us to believe so we become more comfortable compromising on obedience.
- Our calling as children of God, saved by grace alone through the perfections of Christ, is to pursue holy obedience to God in heart, home, & behavior.

2. Esther shows us that some effects of our disobedience to God's good commandments may not fully reveal themselves in our own days. However, just because we do not see it's full effects immediately does not mean it is not still a major breach of faith with major future consequences.

- Disobedience to God & spiritual compromise with the world is NEVER WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE.
- The things we embrace or neglect in our family's lifestyle, as well as the things we embrace or neglect in the Church's practice, WILL ALL HAVE AN INCREDIBLY POWERFUL SHAPING EFFECT ON FUTURE GENERATIONS. And this critical truth cuts both ways, doesn't it?
- Just as surely as our disobedience & spiritual compromise will poison & afflict future generations of Christians, so also our faithful obedience to God & fidelity to his Word by individuals, families, & churches will serve to bless, strengthen, defend, & preserve the generations which follow.
- We must not be like Cain who refused to be his brother's keeper. (Gen. 4) We must not be like Hezekiah who cared only for his own present comfort and not for the bitter future his malpractice was creating for the people who would follow his days. (II Kings 20)
- We must each take responsibility to be faithful to God ourselves & to do so with a view to blessing the future generations of God's people to follow.

Q: How does spiritual compromise happen?

- It begins with us rationalizing and justifying our disobedience to God's commandments.
- We begin to tell ourselves: "*That commandment is too harsh, too cumbersome, too old fashioned, too difficult to practice, inapplicable to me,*" etc.
- Like Saul we say, "*What's wrong w/ keeping the best of the sheep?*" Like Eve we say, "*Why not take a bite of the apple? After all, it looks delicious.*"
- Beloved, whenever you begin to start negotiating your obedience to God's Word and searching for ways to rationalize and justify that disobedience, you can be sure that you have entered the dangerous realm of spiritual compromise. Instead, why not simply trust and obey?

Q: Where do we see this kind of dangerous spiritual compromise in our own days, and in our own hearts, homes, and behavior? (Read Example Questions)

- I can tell you that in every case just alluded to (& more), these are things which many people today think it is absolutely no big deal to compromise on.
- Yet, as a pastor, I can tell you with sorrow in my heart that each of these compromises has yielded tremendously devastating effects on the souls of individuals, on families and marriages, on local churches and denominations, on our nation as a whole, and on entire generations of Christians.
- God's ways matter, beloved. All of them. They must not be set aside. They must not be negotiated. They must not be compromised on.

Q: How should we respond?

1. We must remember that God's grace to us in Christ is greater than our failures in sin & spiritual compromise. (God's promise is our hope, not our performance)
2. We must be humble before God, not proud, and continually cry out for help. (We work out our salvation with fear & trembling, not a cavalier attitude of presumption)
3. Like Paul, we forget what lies behind and press on, straining forward by the strength God provides as we pursue faithful obedience to his holy will.

Application:

Do not fall into the trap of participating in spiritual compromise. Trust God's wisdom and ways as you walk in obedience.

