

What's the Big Idea? Autonomy

1 Samuel 15:12-29

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Introduction: auto – self
nomos – law

- Jerome Schneewind Professor Emeritus Johns Hopkins Univ.
 - “In the Western tradition, the view that individual autonomy is a basic moral and political value is very much a modern development.”
- Modern progressive political philosophy is rooted in autonomy: “I am a free moral agent and no one is to put moral constraints of any sort on me.”
- This is the fundamental nature of sin
- Been around since the beginning of time and it is not a modern development!

I. Saul

- a. Genesis to Samuel – the Hebrews were a collection of tribes
- b. After surveying their pagan neighbors and their political structures, the Hebrews decide they want a king
- c. Samuel, the national priest and spokesman for God, was at first hurt
- d. God said not to be concerned they hadn't rejected Samuel, but God as king
- e. Their first King – Saul:
 - i. Handsome
 - ii. Young
 - iii. Wealthy
 - iv. From a “good” family
 - v. Physically imposing, BUT
 - vi. Had poor impulse control
 - vii. Sacrificed to the Lord

II. The Sin

- a. Agag was a bad guy – bloodthirsty and had the Hebrews in his crosshairs
- b. A longstanding animus
- c. Destroying the Amalekites has some parallels with the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- d. Saul was told to destroy Agag, the Amalekites and all of their critters
- e. Saul himself decided what should go and what should stay. **AUTONOMY**
 - i. Acting as a law unto himself
 - ii. “But the *people* took some of the spoil for themselves
- f. God's disposition towards Saul's Autonomy?
 - i. “. . . your kingdom shall not continue.”

III. Take Away

- a. It is the nature of governments to co-opt power and act autonomously
- b. The sin of autonomy was not unique to Saul
- c. The story of Saul is a picture with a shadow of the ultimate King

Other Relevant Verses Autonomy

1 Sam. 8: 7 – “Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being King over them.”

1 Sam. 9: 2 – “There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, a man of wealth. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From the shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people.”

1 Sam. 10: 8 – “Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you should do.”

1 Sam. 13: 8-10 – “He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offerings. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him.”

1 Sam. 15: 9 ff – “But Saul and the people spared Agag [the king] and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and the fattened calves and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.”

1 Sam. 15: 13 – “And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed be you to the Lord, I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, “What then is the bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen I hear.”

1 Sam. 15: 20, 21 – “And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag, king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction, but the people took the spoil, the sheep, oxen, the best things devoted to destruction to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.”

1 Sam. 13: 13, 14 – “And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

Genesis 3: 6 – “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

Deut. 17: 15 – “You may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among you brothers you shall set as king over you.”

Is. 53: 2,3 – “He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised and we esteemed Him not.”