

HACKING AGAG TO PIECES

A Stand-alone Sermon

by Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Saul was the first king of Israel. God gave him a very specific command. Attack the wicked Amalekites and completely destroy them and everything they have. Saul was to be God's hand of judgment. Saul led the Israelite army to defeat the Amalekites, but he did not completely destroy them. Saul spared the best of the livestock, and the best of everything else, and they spared King Agag. They only destroyed all the worthless and unwanted things. When the prophet Samuel showed up, Saul said, "I have carried out the Lord's instructions." Samuel said, "Then what is the sound of sheep, goats, and cattle I hear?" The Lord had already told Samuel that Saul had been disobedient. Saul tried to give excuses, but Samuel stopped him and said that God had removed the kingdom from Saul and given it to another. Then Samuel "hacked Agag to pieces (1 Sam 15)."
2. This old story illustrates the two options we have with sin. We can keep it alive, or we can destroy it.
3. Saul didn't destroy King Agag. Instead, he placed him under arrest. He thought he could get away with just a little sin. Just a little compromise. But that little sin destroyed him. It cost him and his descendants the kingdom.
4. There's only one right way to handle sin. Destroy it. Hack it to pieces. Completely annihilate it. If you don't destroy sin, it will destroy you. If you tolerate it, spare it, play with it, try to control it, try to tame it, it will kill you.
5. **FDR**, speaking about the Nazis in December 1940, a year before Pearl Harbor, said, "No man can tame a tiger into a kitten by stroking it. There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness. There can be no reasoning with an incendiary bomb."
6. That's the way it is with sin. You can't tame it. You can't appease it. You can't reason with it. It is a wild tiger. It is ruthless. It is an incendiary bomb. Destroy it, or it will destroy you.
7. Today we're going to talk about the Biblical plan for overcoming sin.

II. TYPES OF SINS

1. There are several types of sins in the Bible. We can find them in Psalm 19:12-13.
2. **Psalm 19:12-13** "Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults. Moreover, keep your servant from willful sins; do not let them rule me. Then I will be blameless and cleansed from blatant rebellion."
 - i. Unintentional sins. Sins you don't mean to commit. For example, jealousy. You are not intentionally jealous, but you struggle with it.
 - ii. Hidden faults. Sins that you don't even detect in yourself. You may not realize that you are sinning. For example, pride. Pride is hard to detect in yourself.

- iii. Willful sins. Deliberate sins. Blatant rebellion. Intentional sins. For example, you know it is wrong to steal your mom's money, but you do it anyway.
3. Today I specifically want to talk about overcoming willful sins. Deliberate sins. These are sins that you know are wrong, but you are tempted to do them because they are pleasurable, or because they make your life easier.

III. HOW TO OVERCOME SIN

1. Hate evil.

- i. **Psalm 97:10** "You who love the Lord, hate evil! He protects the lives of his faithful ones; he rescues them from the power of the wicked."
- ii. To overcome sin, you have to hate it.
- iii. The reason many people struggle with sin is because they don't hate it. In fact, they love it. They love their sin more than God.
- iv. You will not overcome sin until you hate your sin more than you hate living without it.
- v. Until you hate your sin, you will not be willing to do what it takes to repent.

2. Do not forget the benefits of obedience.

- i. One of the main reasons we return to our sin is that we forget the blessings of obedience.
- ii. **Psalm 103:2-5** "My soul, bless the Lord, and do not forget all his benefits. He forgives all your iniquity; he heals all your diseases. He redeems your life from the Pit; he crowns you with faithful love and compassion. He satisfies you with good things; your youth is renewed like the eagle."
- iii. There are so many wonderful benefits and blessings given to us when we are obedient, and these are all forfeited when we live in sin.

3. Study God's word.

- i. **Psalm 119:11** "I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you."
- ii. The devil convinces us to sin by lying to us. "God doesn't really love you. God doesn't really have a plan for you. Obedience has no benefits. This sin will make you feel good. It will be worth it. You will be glad you did it. It's just this once. No one will know. God won't mind. He's patient; He won't discipline you. Everyone else is doing it." Your beliefs determine your behavior. If the devil can get you to believe these lies, then he can get you to sin.
- iii. How did the devil tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden? By lying to her and getting her to doubt the truth. He said, "You won't really die."
- iv. This is why it is so important to read, and study, and stay in God's word.
- v. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:32)."
- vi. How did Jesus overcome the devil's temptations? Each time He was tempted, Jesus quoted Scripture (Matthew 4).

4. Avoid tempting situations.

- i. **Proverbs 5:8** “Keep your way far from her. Don’t go near the door of her house.”
 1. This verse is about overcoming sexual temptation; the temptations of the immoral woman. How do you do it? Stay far away from her.
 2. If you struggle with alcohol abuse, then stay away from people who drink and from places where there’s going to be a lot of alcohol.
- ii. To overcome sin you must not simply focus on avoiding sin, but on avoiding things that tempt you to sin. You must avoid triggers. If you willingly subject yourself to temptation, then you will willingly sin.
- iii. **Anonymous** “Temptation usually comes in through a door that has deliberately been left open.”

5. Grow in the fear of the Lord.

- i. **Proverbs 16:6** “... and one turns from evil by the fear of the Lord.”
- ii. The fear of the Lord involves two convictions:
 1. God watches my every step. **2 Kings 19:27** “But I know your sitting down, your going out and your coming in, and your raging against me.”
 2. God will discipline me when I sin. **Hebrews 12:6** “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives.”

6. Remember the consequences of sin.

- i. **Jeremiah 2:19** “Your own evil will discipline you; your own apostasies will reprimand you. Recognize how evil and bitter it is for you to abandon the Lord your God and to have no fear of me. This is the declaration of the Lord God of Armies.”
- ii. God’s discipline is one of the consequences of sin, but there are many more. Sin is its own consequence.
- iii. Consider what sin has done to people: Sin ruins your health; drains your finances; destroys your relationships; decreases your years; wastes your time; damages your reputation; hurts your child’s future. Sin leads to regret, shame, embarrassment, guilt, and worry. It steals your joy and peace. Sin can ruin your marriage, cause your children to hate you, end your career, and land you behind bars. Sin can kill. How many have lost their lives to the poison of sin.
- iv. I’ve said it many times before. “Choose to sin, choose to suffer.”
- v. **Anonymous** “Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go, cost you more than you ever wanted to pay, and keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay.”

7. Do whatever it takes.

- i. **Matthew 5:30** “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”
- ii. This is a hyperbole – a figure of speech in which an exaggeration is used to make a point.
- iii. What is the point? There are two:
 - 1. Sin is so deadly that you should be willing to do whatever it takes to overcome it.
 - 2. Sin is so powerful that you must be willing to do whatever it takes to overcome it.
- iv. Until you are willing to do whatever it takes, your sin will rule over you.

8. Grow in love for God.

- i. **John 14:23** “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.”
- ii. Long term, consistent obedience is energized by love for God. If you have a sin problem, it’s because you have a love problem.
- iii. Loving God is delighting in, desiring, and treasuring God above all else. It is when you adore God with all your heart; and you feel affection for Him with all your heart; and He is the most important thing in the universe to you.
- iv. This love translates into a desire to please God that overwhelms all other desires.
- v. The more you love God, the more you will want to please Him rather than to satisfy your sinful desires.
- vi. How do you grow in your love for God? Think about how much He loves you. Thank Him for His many blessings. Meditate on the cross. Sing praises to Him.

9. Abide in Christ.

- i. **John 15:5** “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.”
- ii. Fruit is a metaphor for accomplishing God’s will.
- iii. How do we produce much fruit? How do we live in obedience? Remain in Christ. Abide in Christ. Keep a constant, close connection with Jesus.
- iv. In other words, the power for obedience comes from Jesus. If we want His power, we must focus on abiding in Christ.
- v. Stay close, and fruit happens.
- vi. How do you stay close to Jesus? Prayer. Bible study. Home Group. Daily Quiet time. Sunday worship.

10. Make a decision to repent.

- i. You will not overcome sin until you make a conscious, deliberate decision to stop sinning. To walk in obedience. To repent.
- ii. What is repentance? Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to God in obedience.

- iii. Many Christians want to overcome sin, but they haven't actually decided to do so. They haven't made a conscious decision to turn repent.
- iv. **Romans 6:11-13** "11 So, you too consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires. 13 And do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves to God as weapons for righteousness."
- v. This passage gives us the steps involved in repentance:
 1. "Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God (v. 11)." Realize that your purpose in life is to be completely holy and dedicated to God. Sin is no longer to be a part of your life at all.
 2. Turn from all sin. Verse 12 "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body." Verse 13 "And do not offer any parts of it to sin." To overcome sin, you can't pick and choose which sins you want to stop. Sin is like a contagious disease; if you allow it in one part of your body, it will spread to other areas.
 3. Turn to God completely. Verse 13 "Offer yourselves to God." To overcome sin you will need God's help, and God will not help you overcome sin if you are doing it for selfish reasons. Your ultimate motivation must be to please God. To glorify Him. To serve Him. You must totally devote yourself to Him, and He will give you the strength you need.

11. Know that you can overcome sin.

- i. If you don't think that turning away from sin is possible, then you won't try; or you may try, but you won't do whatever it takes. After all, what's the point?
- ii. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** "9 Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, 10 no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. 11 And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."
- iii. The church in Corinth was filled with people who were sinners, but sinners no more. God changed them. They "used to be like this." But they were washed, sanctified, and justified.
- iv. You can change!

12. Ask God to help you live as you should.

- i. **Romans 13:14 (LB)** "But ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you live as you should, and don't make plans to enjoy evil."

- ii. In your fight against sin, do not neglect prayer. Ask the Lord to help you overcome sin.
- iii. **Matthew 6:13** “And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

13. Do not think about ways to sin.

- i. **Romans 13:14 (NLT)** “Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires.”
- ii. Before we commit intentional sins, we have to intend to do them. To intend to something is to think about doing it. It is to premeditate on it. Before we sin, we think about it, we fantasize, we make plans, we figure out how we’re going to get away with it, and eventually we do it.
- iii. Therefore, the key to defeating sin is to nip it in the bud by not thinking about it. Do not let your mind meditate on sin. Do not let your mind fantasize about sin. Do not let sin dwell in your mind at all.
- iv. If you can prevent your mind from thinking of sin, then you can prevent your body from carrying out sin.
- v. How do you stop thinking about something? You can’t. Instead, you have to think about something else, and the best thing to think about is Scripture. Find a verse that deals with your besetting sin and memorize it. Then, whenever you are tempted to think about sin, meditate on that verse until the temptations subsides.

14. Remember what it takes to be used by God.

- i. **2 Timothy 2:21** “So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.”
- ii. Do you want to be used by God? Then you must be pure. Remembering this one fact may provide the motivation you need to overcome temptation.

15. Fellowship with other like-minded believers.

- i. **Proverbs 13:20 (LB)** “Be with wise men and become wise. Be with evil men and become evil.”
- ii. To overcome sin you must stay away from sinners and associate with godly people.
- iii. People rub off on each other. We influence each other. And it is easier to be pulled down than to pull others up.
- iv. **JC Ryle** “Nothing perhaps affects man's character, more than the company he keeps. We catch the ways and tone of those we live and talk with, and unhappily get harm — far more easily than good. Disease is infectious — but health is not!”

16. Have faith that God will reward your obedience.

- i. **Ephesians 6:16** “In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”
- ii. How do we overcome the temptation to sin? Faith. Faith in what?
- iii. **Hebrews 11:6** “Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”
- iv. To overcome sin we must have faith that God is watching us and will reward us for choosing good over evil.
- v. In Leviticus 26:3-12, God promises His people with at least 18 rewards if they will obey Him:
 1. Rain at the right time.
 2. The land will yield its produce.
 3. The trees of the field will bear fruit.
 4. Your threshing will continue until grape harvest, and the grape harvest will continue until sowing time.
 5. You will have plenty of food to eat.
 6. You will live securely in your land.
 7. I will give peace to the land.
 8. You will lie down with nothing to frighten you.
 9. I will remove dangerous animals from the land.
 10. No sword will pass through your land.
 11. You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand.
 12. I will turn to you.
 13. I will make you fruitful and multiply you.
 14. You will eat the old grain of the previous year and will clear out the old to make room for the new.
 15. I will place my residence among you.
 16. I will not reject you.
 17. I will walk among you and be your God.
 18. You will be my people.

17. Lay aside every hindrance.

- i. **Hebrews 12:1** “Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us”
- ii. This verse commands us not only to lay aside the sin that so easily ensnares us, but to lay aside every hindrance. What is a hindrance? A hindrance is something that may not be sinful, but it makes obedience harder. It could be the places you go, the people you hang out with, your hobbies, the things you watch on TV, the material you read, the music you listen to. You can

argue that these things are not sinful in and of themselves, but they make obedience more difficult. So get rid of them.

- iii. Instead, replace them with things that will make obedience easier; things that will encourage obedience.

18. Be miserable and mourn and weep for your sin.

- i. **James 4:9** “Be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.”
- ii. A key to overcoming sin is to mourn for it. Not just to hate it, but to mourn. Consider the evil of your sin; the pain and suffering your sin has caused; and mourn for it. Weep because you have hurt yourself, and your loved ones, and displeased your Savior. The Bible says this is the proper attitude toward sin, and it leads to repentance.
- iii. **2 Corinthians 7:10** “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, but worldly grief produces death.”
- iv. This godly grief is often called brokenness, or a broken spirit. **Psalms 51:17** “The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God.”

19. Confess it to a friend so they can pray for you.

- i. **James 5:16** “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.”
- ii. The most difficult sin to overcome is the secret sin, because if it is secret than no one can encourage you and pray for you.
- iii. It is important to confess your sins to others, not so they will forgive you; only God can do that, unless the sin is committed against an individual. We must confess our sins to receive encouragement and instruction.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. King Saul decided to let Agag live, and it cost him the kingdom. Don't let that happen to you. Do what Samuel did to Agag, and hack your sin to pieces.