

## OT LESSON #22

# “THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART”

by Ted Gibbons

**INTRODUCTION:** I was reading the Book of Mormon a few days ago, when a familiar passage was clarified. The passage from Mormon 7 teaches:

For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he shall do it with real intent it profiteth him nothing. For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness. For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God. And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such. Wherefore, a man being evil cannot do that which is good; neither will he give a good gift (Moroni 7:6-10).

The message here is the message of this lesson. Our attitude is more important than our actions. Why we do a thing has more significance than the thing we do. The text of Moroni 7 makes it perfectly clear that an evil man could do a really good thing, and even though others might be blessed or benefitted by that thing, he himself would not be—the act would not be a righteous act.

People might be deceived by such actions. We are trained to look only at the surfaces of people. We judge them by their body odor and their clothes and their friends and their employment and their families and their homes. But we hardly ever judge them by their hearts.

### **1. SAUL SEEKS GUIDANCE FROM SAMUEL AND IS ANOINTED KING.**

If our own children sought an opportunity from us to which we were openly and deeply opposed, and if we expressed our opposition and they persisted still in demanding their own way, we might be inclined to offer them their desires in such a way that failure would quickly follow. *All right, I'll buy you a car. Here is a 1974 Ford Pinto with a cracked windshield and a cracked*

*block. Good luck!* But the Lord, even though he had unmistakably declared is opposition to an earthly king for Israel, still offered them the best man he could find. Saul was

- < A choice and goodly young man (1 Sam 9:2)
- < He was obedient (1 Sam 9:3)
- < He was diligent and reliable (1 Sam 9:4)
- < He had and demonstrated faith in the prophet (1 Sam 9:10)
- < He was chosen by the Lord (1 Sam 9:16,20; 10:1).
- < He was humble (1 Sam 9:21; 10:16; 10:22)
- < He was worthy to be born again and have a change of heart (1 Sam 10:6,9)
- < As a king he, like Benjamin, labored with his own hands for his own support (1 Sam 10:26; 11:5; see Mosiah 2:14)
- < He was forgiving to those who opposed him (1 Sam 10:27; 11:13)

What lesson can we learn about the Lord and about ourselves from this event? If serving others is like serving God, and if the second great commandment to love our neighbors is “like unto” the first to love God, how should we serve others. What should we be willing to do for those whose interests do not exactly coincide with our own?

There is evidence that the Lord will condemn us for withholding our best efforts because of the sins or weaknesses in others.

Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God (Mosiah 4:17,18)

## **2. SAUL OFFERS A BURNT OFFERING WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORITY.**

The Philistines had “gathered themselves together to fight with Israel.” Look at 1 Sam 13:5. How large was the army that had come to battle? How did

the soldiers of Israel respond? In 1 Sam 13:6, we learn that they hid in caves and thickets and high places and rocks. In 1 Sam 13:7, they fled across the Jordan River to less dangerous country.

Saul watched his army diminish as “he tarried seven days” waiting for Samuel to come as he had indicated he would. During that time, “the people were scattered from him.” (1 Sam 13:8) It was then, in a moment of fear, Saul made a great mistake.

And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering (1 Sam. 13:9).

Saul had no authority to offer sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood was for the tribe of Levi and Saul was a son of Benjamin (1 Sam. 9:1,2). He certainly did not have the Melchizedek Priesthood like Samuel. But he acted anyway. In his efforts to explain himself to a disappointed Samuel, he offered four excuses.

1. “The people were scattered” (1 Sam 13:11)
2. “Thou camest not”(1 Sam 13:11)
3. “The Philistines gathered themselves together (1 Sam 13:11)

The fourth excuse may open a window and give us a useful glimpse into the soul of this man.

4. “I forced myself” (1 Sam 13:12)

What did Saul mean when he told Samuel that he had to *force himself* to offer a sacrifice? Does it sound to you like he is saying this? *“I did not want to be disobedient, but I had to do what I had to do because the Prophet and the Lord clearly weren’t ready to deal with the Philistine invasion.”*

I think this may be a fairly common excuse for disobedience. “I did what God would have wanted me to do if he had all the facts.” A son of mine told me the other day that he would have attended Stake Priesthood Meeting, but a girl friend needed help moving out of an apartment. Well, maybe she did. But it is hard to imagine that the packing and moving could only happen during a gathering of priesthood holders.

Samuel, who arrived on the scene “as soon as [Saul] had made an end of offering the burnt offering . . .” (1 Sam. 13:10), said, “What hast thou done?” (1 Sam 13:11).

Saul prepared the burnt offering himself, forgetting that though he occupied the throne, wore the crown, and bore the scepter, these insignia of kingly power gave him no right to officiate even as a deacon in the Priesthood of God . . . (James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, pp. 184,185).

Saul knew what he had done was wrong, but he did it anyway. What did it cost Saul to be disobedient?

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee (1 Sam 13:13,14)

Disobedience might likewise make it impossible for us to inherit a throne. In fact, losing a throne is the going price for disobedience. The Lord said,

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

The account of this tragic error by Saul is followed at once by the story of what Saul ought to have done. Saul, fearful of the decreasing size of his forces, relied on his own wisdom and power to solve the problem. But in 1 Sam 14, Jonathan the son of Saul, armed with faith and the power of God, defeats a Philistine army with only one other soldier to aid him.

Jonathan, observing the enemy garrison,

said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the

Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few (1 Sam 14:6)

Jonathan did not yet know the Lord's will. He said, "it may be that the Lord will work for us."

What he did know was that if the Lord worked with them, the two of them could defeat the entire Philistine army, for "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." Why didn't Saul know that? Or did he know it and ignore the knowledge?

I really like Jonathan's armorbearer. His master had just suggested to him that the two of them make plans to attack and rout the Philistine army. How would you have responded? How many reasons can you think of not to go along with such an endeavor? But this young man, who certainly knew the goodness of Jonathan and the rectitude of his heart, said, "Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart" (1 Sam 14:7). Wow!

Saul's son devised a plan to ascertain whether or not the Lord would assist them. Here it is:

Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the Lord hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us (1 Sam. 14:8-10).

How do you like that plan? From the safety of a rocking chair in Riverton, Utah, it might seem all right, but how would it sound if you were out in the rocks creeping up on the Philistine outposts?

You know how this story will end. Even if you have never read it you know. The Philistines called to the two young men to "Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing" or two. And Jonathan turned to his companion and said, "Charge!"

Come up after me: for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel (1 Sam 14:12).

They attacked and before they had finished, “the multitude [of Philistines] melted away, and they went on beating down one another” (1 Sam 14:16).

Some lessons from this story:

- < Be like the armorbearer, Follow righteous men even when the desired outcome seems impossible.
- < There is no restraint in the Lord. He does not need an army to defeat an army. How many missionaries did he send to the land of the Lamanites? How many men did Gideon take with him?
- < You may not always know what the Lord wants you to do, but when you do know, do it! It is unfortunate that Saul did not learn this lesson.

### **3. SAUL DISOBEYS THE Lord IN THE BATTLE WITH THE AMALEKITES AND IS REJECTED FROM BEING KING.**

Meanwhile, back at the story of Saul: the unauthorized sacrifice was not his only problem. In 1 Sam. 15 he was sent on a mission by Samuel to destroy the Amalekites. There was no ambiguity in the direction given to Saul.

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass (1 Sam. 15:3)

But something had happened to Saul since those days when he first met the prophet and was anointed king. There had been a time when Saul “was little in [his] own sight” (1 Sam 15:17), but not now. Now Saul was a great, victorious king, no longer as willing to follow counsel. He had become proud.

But Saul and the people spared Agag [the king], and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly (1 Sam. 15:9).

The Lord told Samuel what had happened, and the prophet went out to meet the king, who said, “Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord” (1 Sam. 15:13).

Samuel pointed out that he had not. They could both hear the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen. Saul offered another excuse. “We kept the best of the animals for sacrifice.” he said, “and the rest we have utterly destroyed” (1 Sam. 15:17).

“We *almost* kept the commandment,” Saul claimed. What a frightening idea. What will it mean if we say to the Lord or to his servants, “My spouse and I *almost* served a mission when we retired.” Or “I was *almost* morally clean.” Or “I *almost* got to the temple when I was married.” Or “I *almost* fulfilled my calling.”

You probably remember the language of Paul and Agrippa at Caesarea:

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds (Acts 26: 28,29).

Saul tried to blame the people: “the people took of the spoil” (1 Sam 15:21), he protested. And he let them “because [he] feared the people and obeyed their voice” (1 Sam 15:24).

But Samuel (and Saul) knew who was really responsible:

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (1 Sam. 15:23).

#### **4. THE Lord CHOOSES DAVID AS KING.**

Samuel gave us another rather frightening look at the heart of Saul when the Lord told him to go anoint a new king. “And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me” (1 Sam. 16:2). Samuel had grieved and prayed all night for Saul (15:11), and he had mourned for him in his

wickedness (15:35; 16:1). But Saul was nearly beyond redemption. He was now willing to *kill the prophet* to assure his family's continuity on the throne of Israel.

When Samuel got to Bethlehem and began to meet the sons of Jesse, he thought he could select the new king on his own.

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him (1 Sam. 16:6).

But even the prophet Samuel could not see all the things God could see.

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam 16:7).

What lesson do you think we ought to learn from this declaration. What would the Lord like us to do in our interpersonal relationships that we are not doing? In what ways can we enable ourselves to better see the hearts of people. The Lord has given us some hints:

Wherefore, I would speak unto you that are of the church, that are the peaceable followers of Christ, and that have obtained a sufficient hope by which ye can enter into the rest of the Lord, from this time henceforth until ye shall rest with him in heaven. And now my brethren, I judge these things of you because of your peaceable walk with the children of men. For I remember the word of God, which saith by their works ye shall know them; for if their works be good, then they are good also (Moroni 7:3-5).

It fascinates me that Mormon is able to determine that these people will "enter into the rest of the Lord" only because he has observed their "peaceable walk with the children of men."

We would want to be careful about making critical judgements based on a single act, but even that has happened. Brigham Young declared that a



single act of three young men would enable them to “enter into the rest of the Lord.” When the Martin handcart company arrived at the crossing of the Sweetwater, it was running fast and carrying great chunks of ice. Men and women sat in the snow and wept at the impossible ordeal represented by that river. Then,

Three 18-year-old boys belonging to the relief party came to the rescue, and to the astonishment of all who saw, carried nearly every member of that ill-fated handcart company across the snowbound stream. The strain was so terrible and the exposure so great, that in later years all the boys died from the effects of it. When President Brigham Young heard of this heroic act, he wept like a child, and later declared publicly, ‘that act alone will ensure C. Allen Huntington, George W. Grant and David P. Kimball an everlasting salvation in the Celestial Kingdom of God, worlds without end (Gordon B. Hinckley, Church News, 7-29-95: "Prophet Pays Tribute to Utah’s Pioneers").

## **5. DAVIS SLAYS GOLIATH IN THE STRENGTH OF THE Lord.**

Goliath was as big as a barn. Probably about 9-1/2 feet tall (1 Sam. 17:4), he had a coat of mail that weighed about 125 pounds (1 Sam. 17:5). The staff of his spear was like the beam on which a weaver hangs his loom, and the spear head weighed about 15 pounds (1 Sam. 17:7).

What challenge did Goliath hurl at Israel? (1 Sam. 17:8-10). How many days did he present his challenge? (1 Sam. 17:16). How did the soldiers of Israel respond? (1 Sam. 17:11). David had brothers in the army and was sent by his father with provisions for them. He arrived at the scene of battle at a critical moment:

[H]e came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army (1 Sam. 17:20,21).

But before the battle could be joined, Goliath appeared and challenged Israel to send a man to fight him one on one, winner take all.

And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him,

and were sore afraid (1 Sam. 17 :24).

David, who seemed to know what Jonathan had known in 1 Sam 14, was amazed that the army of the living God could fear anything.

And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? (1 Sam. 17:26).

Eliab, one of the older brothers who was not selected to be the next king, rebuked David.

And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle (1 Sam. 17:28)

But David seemed to see a higher purpose in his visit to the battle lines. He said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17:29).

Later David offered to go himself against this monstrous Philistine:

And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine (1 Sam. 17:32).

David had learned in times of crisis with the sheep of his father that the Lord could and would protect him. He knew that "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." He overcame Saul's protestations and refused his armour. Instead he went with the Armor of God, a shepherd's staff, and a sling.

A note in Judges indicates how accurate a trained man with a sling can be.

Among [the soldiers of Benjamin] there were seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair

breadth, and not miss (Judges 20:16)

Goliath was outraged that a boy had come against him.

And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field (1 Sam. 17:42-44).

David was not intimidated. He had something better than lethal weapons to aid him in his fight against the giant.

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth . . . (1 Sam. 17:45,46).

David even knew why the Lord would assist him in this battle:

- < “[T]hat all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel“ (1 Sam. 17:46) .
- < “And all this assembly [probably the Israelites] shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:47).

David was doing missionary work for all the earth and home teaching for all the members. How could he fail?

## **CONCLUSION:**

Giants come into every life. We must destroy them or fall victim.

Well might we look carefully into our own lives and judge our courage, our faith. Is there a Goliath in your life? Is there one in mine? Does he stand squarely between you and your desired happiness? Your Goliath may not carry a sword or hurl a verbal challenge of insult that all may hear and force you to decision. He may not be ten feet tall, but he likely will appear equally as formidable, and his silent challenge may shame and embarrass.

One man's Goliath may be the stranglehold of a cigarette or perhaps an unquenchable thirst for alcohol. To another, her Goliath may be an unruly tongue or a selfish streak which causes her to spurn the poor and the downtrodden. Envy, greed, fear, laziness, doubt, vice, pride, lust, selfishness, discouragement—all spell Goliath. . . .

The battle for our souls is no less important than the battle fought by David. The enemy is no less formidable, the help of Almighty God no farther away. What will our action be? Like David of old, "our cause is just." We have been placed upon earth not to fail or fall victim to temptation's snare, but rather to succeed. Our giant, our Goliath, A.D. must be conquered (Thomas S. Monson, "Meeting Your Goliath," *Ensign*, Jan. 1987, 4)

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