

Obedience is Always THE Dividing Issue

We're taking a side road tonight, from our study of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. Before we begin, I need to repent for a position I have taken up to today that may be in error. You have heard me say, on several occasions that, as far I could tell, evil spirits do not have access to our minds. I said that I could find no scriptural basis for the idea that Satan or any other spirit could speak or otherwise mess around with our thoughts. Rather, I have declared the belief, based on my understanding of the scriptures, that thought patterns not inspired by the Lord or the Holy Spirit were purely from our own databanks, stemming from our upbringing and conditioning. It has long bothered me to hear what to me is overblown credit give to "THE ENEMY" for all that we think and feel that is not from God. I have been unwilling to give Satan—or any other unclean spirit—that kind of power, let alone access!

The short version is that I may have been wrong, and God has required me to examine the subject in light of the principle that "obedience is always the dividing issue." You've heard that phrase before, if you've been listening to Light Up The Scriptures for any length of time. It's one of Barbara's one-liners that just cuts through any B.S.

How does obedience relate to spirit influence? Spirits have to have a point of access to us...a gait, so to speak. Somewhere through our senses, we can provide access to spirits not of God to enter us—I mean literally enter us—and inhabit us. We can deny them access in the first place, but once we've allowed them in and they've taken up residence, they can freely influence our minds as well as our actions. At any point we can call these spirits out of us and deny them further access, but it requires a spirit-filled determination and unwavering decision to stay broken and obedient before God, because it was only through rebellion and disobedience that access was granted in the first place.

Now let's examine together whether everything I just said has any merit, 'cause remember, God is the authority here, not me. I'm just the ravenous student, and I ask God and you to forgive me for taking a position—and teaching it—that I had not completely studied. It sounded good and right, but it looks to have been wrong and must be corrected right now.

1 Samuel 9 – The story of Saul

¹ There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish...² Kish had a son named Saul, **as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.**

Notice what set's Saul apart from others: his appearance...(read highlighted parts). All Israel wanted was a King, and God gave them someone who LOOKED the part, and who would do everything He had warned Israel a King would do. But never mind, He'll be good looking and taller than everyone else. The scriptures list no other qualifications for the office of King over all Israel.

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ¹⁶ “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.” ¹⁷ When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”

Samuel was the prophet, given to the Lord from birth by His mother, of whom the scriptures say, “*The LORD was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel’s words fall to the ground.*” (1 Samuel 3:19). The Lord told Samuel when he would meet the man whom the Lord had chosen to be Israel’s first King, and pointed him out to Samuel when Saul arrived in Samuel’s village the next day. The point here is that God was detailed and clear...Samuel could not have missed Saul. Saul, however did not know Samuel. All Saul knew was that a “man of God,” whose counsel Saul needed, lived in the village.

Read 1 Samuel 9 (**THIGH**) through 10

¹⁰⁻⁸ ...**you must wait seven days...**

⁹ As Saul turned to leave Samuel, **God changed Saul’s heart** “CLV= “transformed his heart into another”...**God metamorphosed Saul’s heart into another!**

1 Samuel 12 – At Saul’s crowning, Samuel puts Israel **and Saul** on notice:

¹⁴ If you fear the LORD and serve and obey him and do not rebel against his commands, and if both you **and the king** who reigns over you follow the LORD your God—good! ¹⁵ But if you do not obey the LORD, and if you rebel against his commands, his hand will be against you, as it was against your ancestors.

So, Saul prepares to make war on the Philistines, sets up camp at Gikal and waits the 7 days Samuel told him about...and the trouble begins:

1 Samuel 13:7b-15: Saul's disobedience lost him the kingdom before he even began reigning in earnest! Also, notice, Saul did not repent in this first incident.

1 Samuel 15 – God has delivered Saul's enemies up to now, and they were everywhere –on all sides. Samuel gives Saul another instruction from the Lord—very clear and specific:

³ Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.”

Read verses 7-34

1 Samuel 16 –

¹ The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

We've certainly come a long way in a very short time, from Saul seeking out the “man of God,” to that same man of God being Saul's target!

Remember **1 Samuel 9:9** – “*God changed Saul's heart.*”

Let's review a little history:

Exodus 7

³ But **I will harden Pharaoh's heart**, and ...⁴ **he will not listen to you.**

Exodus 7:13-11: Pharaoh's heart “was steadfast” 3 times; Pharaoh “caused it to glory” twice; He “gloried in his heart” or “it gloried” twice, and the Lord made his heart steadfast 4 times, plus the original declaration...12 specific references

Look what happens here:

Exodus 10:16 –

Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷ Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me.”

7 Verse 13 - Pharaoh's heart **was steadfast** and he would not listen to them, just as the LORD had said.

Verse 22 - Pharaoh's heart **was steadfast** and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

Exodus 8:15 – when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, **he caused his heart to glory** and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

Verse 19 – Pharaoh's heart **was steadfast** and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

Verse 32 – Pharaoh **gloried in his heart** and would not let the people go.

Exodus 9:7 – **the heart of Pharaoh gloried** and he would not let the people go.

Verse 12 – **the LORD made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast** and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

Verse 33 – He and his officials hardened their hearts. ³⁵ So **Pharaoh made his heart glory** and he would not let the Israelites go, just as the LORD had said through Moses.

Exodus 10:16 – Pharaoh quickly summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “I have sinned against the LORD your God and against you. ¹⁷ Now forgive my sin once more and pray to the LORD your God to take this deadly plague away from me.”

Verse 20 – **the LORD made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast**, and he would not let the Israelites go.

Verse 27 – **the LORD made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast**, and he was not willing to let them go.

Exodus 11:9 – The LORD had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.” ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but **the LORD made the heart of Pharaoh steadfast**, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

Compare Exodus 10:16 to 1 Samuel 15:24

²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned. I violated the LORD’s command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them. ²⁵ Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD.”

²⁶ But Samuel said to him, “I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!”

The Lord made Pharaoh’s heart steadfast; Pharaoh gloried in it also, and we know the consequences, but what was the purpose? It is written:

Exodus 7:5

...the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD

Exodus 11:9 –

...so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt.

The Lord changed Saul’s heart, in an instant – and what were the consequences:

1 Samuel 15:24 - the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!

Why did the Lord reject Saul? DISOBEDIENCE – TWICE

1 Samuel 13 and 15

In 1 Samuel 15:22, we learn what the Lord truly values

1 Samuel 15:22 –

To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king.”

“Heed” = to turn the mind to, attend to be attentive; to apply one's self to, attach one's self to, hold or cleave to; to devote thought and effort to; to be given or addicted to;

“Obey” = to listen; to submit to; to harken to a command – CLNT: “Hear *AND* Heed”

When Samuel went to find Whom the Lord had chosen as Israel's next king, here's what the Lord told Samuel:

1 Samuel 16:7 –

You must not look at his appearance or the loftiness of his stature [wasn't that what distinguished Saul?]. For not as a human sees, does the One, Elohim, see. A human sees the visible appearance, yet Yahweh sees into the heart...”

...

13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the spirit of Yahweh prospered on David from that day onward.

14 As for the spirit of Yahweh, it had withdrawn from Saul, and an evil spirit from Yahweh frightened him (other versions say “tormented”). Saul's courtiers said to him, Behold now, an evil spirit from Elohim is frightening you.

The prescription was music, specifically a harp!

²³ Whenever it occurred that an evil spirit from Elohim came over Saul then David took the harp and played with his hand. It inspired Saul, and it was well with him. Then the evil spirit would withdraw from on him.

OK, let's review, so we can grasp the picture and learn from the Lord:

- God chose Saul, and all we're told about his physical appearance
- God transformed Saul's heart
 - **QUESTION:** if God knew what Saul's heart was, why did He change it?
 - Saul disobeyed the Lord twice – Saul is the object lesson for disobedience and rebellion. He was uniquely suited...a “vessel of dishonor”
 - God sent an evil spirit to “frighten” Saul
- God chose David for his heart for God, and David becomes the standard for obedience and repentance, with the consequences being a legacy of honor, respect, prosperity lasting throughout the eons

- Saul is the standard for disobedience and rebellion, with the consequences being dishonor (except from David), struggle, and torment.

Barbara makes the object lesson very simple: *“Saul repented because he got caught. David repented because he had a heart for God.”*

This looks to me like an 3-fold object lesson:

The sovereignty of God (potter, Romans 9)

The fruit of obedience and disobedience -- Hearts and minds

What opens people to spirits other than God’s

Gates: Ears, eyes –

Mark 4:24 - *Beware what you are hearing*

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks

Proverbs: do let the words of your mouth defile the works of your hands

The religious Jews during Jesus’ ministry (Isaiah’s prophecy)

“Vessels of dishonor and honor”

Next, David – a man after His own heart – is anointed King over Israel, but God’s timing isn’t man’s timing. It is many years later that David is crowned.

Romans 9

21 Or has not the potter the right over the clay, out of the same kneading to make one vessel, indeed, for honor, yet one for dishonor?

22 Now if God, wanting to display His indignation and to make His powerful doings known, carries, with much patience, the vessels of indignation, adapted for destruction,

23 it is that He should also be making known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He makes ready before for glory --

24 us, whom He calls also, not only out of the Jews, but out of the nations also.

25 As He is saying in Hosea also: I shall be calling those who are not My people "My people," And she who is not beloved "Beloved,"

26 "And it shall be, in the place where it was declared to them, 'Not My people are you,'" There "they shall be called 'sons of the living God.'"