

[R4218 : page 235]

THE SPIRIT OF ENVY AND MURDER
- / SAMUEL 18:6-16. - AUGUST 16. -

**Golden Text: – "The Lord God is a sun and shield."
– Psalm 84:11.**

THIS lesson affords us a contrast between a spirit or disposition in harmony with the Lord and a spirit or disposition out of harmony with him and his arrangements. The first is exhibited in David, the shepherd boy, secretly anointed to the office of king and later brought into prominence through his victory over Goliath, recounted in our last lesson. So far as Saul is concerned the record is that an evil or malevolent spirit possessed him. On the contrary the Spirit of the Lord is said to have been with David from the time of his anointing. We are not to confuse in our minds those blessings of the Lord's Spirit in ancient times with the still more blessed experiences of God's people throughout the Gospel Age under the anointing of the holy Spirit, the begetting of the holy Spirit, the sealing of the holy Spirit as sons. Doubtless there would be much in common in the experiences of those who received the Lord's Spirit at that time and those who receive it now; but most certainly that which we now enjoy as the "house of sons" is far beyond anything that was possible for the "house of servants" to experience; because the holy Spirit as a comforter and guide into the truth and a seal of the new nature was not then given, because Jesus was not then glorified. Hence the blessing of the Spirit given at Pentecost and enjoyed by the Church since is peculiarly the Lord's blessing for the Bride class and has been possible only since their Advocate appeared in the presence of God for them in the merit of his own sacrifice.

To whatever extent the holy Spirit was bestowed upon the "house of servants" it would necessarily be a spirit of moderation, of fellowship with God, of desire to do his will and of peace with him; and to this extent it would be the spirit of a sound mind, relieving its possessor of much of the nervous fret and strain, excitability and languor which might be his own naturally under trials and disappointments. Of Saul, it is said that an evil spirit entered into him, but this does not necessarily mean that he became obsessed of a demon, but rather that an evil mind, a perverse mind or disposition, an unhappy or melancholy mind took the place of the restful and peaceful and trustful mind which he previously had enjoyed.

AN EVIL SPIRIT FROM THE LORD

But we read that an evil spirit from God came upon Saul and he prophesied in the midst of the house. This would seem more like an obsession, or, as Dr. Merrine suggests in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Saul had psychic epilepsy; he says, "Epilepsy may coexist with a healthy growth and development of the intellectual faculties, and a very high degree of intelligence and even genius may be associated with it. Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar, Napoleon, Petrarch, Mohammed, Moliere, Handel and many other great men were epileptics. Certain peculiarities are common to the whole class of epileptics, and dominate their character, such as an explosive irritability of temper; in some instances a display of highest excitement, and again a gloomy stupor. Numerous criminal acts have been committed while in this state."

We do not get the thought that this evil spirit was from the Lord in the sense that the Lord exercised this evil influence upon Saul, but we understand the word *from* in an entirely different sense, and signifying *not of*, contrary to: "An evil spirit [apart] from the Lord was upon Saul." The Apostle tells us that anger,

malice, hatred, envy and strife are works of the flesh and of the devil, and hence to whatever extent Saul or anybody else came into sympathy with these works of the Adversary to that extent he would have, would be controlled by an evil spirit, an evil disposition, the Adversary's spirit; and, as a matter of fact, those who come consciously into accord with the Adversary in spirit become thereby exposed to obsession, to the intrusion of the evil spirits themselves.

It is undoubtedly true that persons whose minds are in sympathetic accord with righteousness and truth, are proportionately surrounded by a protective influence which shields them from the intrusion of the evil spirits. This is the intimation of the Scriptures, which declare that the holy angels are ministering spirits for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and **[R4218 : page 236]** delivereth them." (Heb. 1:14; Psa. 34:7.) But with any departure from the reverence of the Lord, with any departure from loyalty to righteousness and truth would come a corresponding separation from this holy protecting influence of the angels of the Lord and a consequent exposure of heart, of mind, to the malevolent influences of the fallen angels, who are ever ready to enter into such, and more seriously than ever defile them. This lesson seems to be enforced by our Lord's parable of the man out of whom a devil had been cast and his heart swept and garnished; not, however, receiving into it the good Shepherd of his soul, but, standing for righteousness merely in his own strength, he was assaulted by seven demons more wicked than the first and was overcome, and the last end of that man was worse than the beginning. – Luke 11:24-26.

Thus it was with Saul; as a natural man he evidently had some noble characteristics, because of which Samuel loved him; but failing to make a full consecration of himself to the Lord he

was continually beset by his own will, a spirit of selfishness, which hindered him from being a satisfactory servant of the Lord. As a result of this, the Lord's special protection and assistance were not afforded him, and correspondingly the spirit of selfishness grew. In our lesson we saw that so far from desiring that the will of the Lord should be done in him and in all of his affairs the very reverse spirit of selfishness, of self will, grew rankly in his heart. These heart conditions merely needed an opportunity to manifest themselves, and this opportunity came in connection with David. After the exploit with Goliath the fame of David greatly spread abroad throughout the cities of Israel. As the story was told subsequently that he with the army gave battle with the Philistines and victory resulted, his praises were sung after the custom of the time by women and children, who at the gates of the various cities saluted the returning victorious warriors. A song gradually spread, the chorus of which was, "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands."

It would have required a man of very large calibre in Saul's place not to be offended at this, not to feel jealous of such honors given to the young hero of the hour, implying that he had entirely eclipsed the king. But whatever might have been the natural sentiment of King Saul or others there can be no doubt as to what would have been the proper one. The king should have rejoiced and taken pleasure in honoring the young patriot, whose chivalry had been so blessed to the whole nation. To have done this would have been to evince the spirit of a sound mind, and it would have redounded to the honor of Saul himself. But it does not surprise us that it had an opposite effect upon him, knowing as we do the general spirit of the world in respect to such matters – the spirit of selfishness and pride. Saul was filled with anger and envy and eyed David jealously henceforth. He recognized in him a rival; he also perceived that David was a true servant of the Lord, and that the Lord's blessing was upon him. Jonathan, on the contrary,

of a different cast of mind, loved David more and more, because of the very qualities which led his father to hate David.

LESSONS FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

Keeping in mind that the anointed David represents the Church, the Lord's anointed, who by and by with Jesus their Head shall occupy the throne of the world's dominion for the blessing and uplifting of mankind, and for the deliverance of all from the yoke of Satan, sin and death, we may properly enough apply the essence of this lesson to this class. Their victories over the evil one, over the power of sin in their own bodies, and their general fighting of the good fight of faith bring the approval of some of the Jonathan class, as well as the comfort of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Lord's Word. (2 Pet. 1:4.) But these victories over sin will not bring to this class the love **[R4219 : page 236]** of the world, the love of those who have not the Lord's Spirit, but a selfish spirit, the spirit of those represented by Saul. Of this condition of things the Lord forewarned us saying, "Marvel not if the world hate you; ye know that it hated me before it hated you." He tells us that we are the children of the light, and should let our lights shine, and that in proportion as we are faithful in so doing it will bring upon us the opposition of the children of darkness, who love the darkness rather than the light, who love sin rather than righteousness, selfishness rather than love.

Perhaps, too, Saul represented those of the present time who in the nominal Church system, the nominal kingdom of God, affect to be reigning now. As they perceive the Lord's blessing on those who have no titles amongst men and whose anointing is not of man, neither recognized by man, they feel jealous of their success, they seem to realize that the prosperity of Present Truth in the world makes steadily against the institutions of Babylon. Every victory for truth, every evidence of the Lord's

favor towards it seems to beget an evil spirit of indignation, of opposition, hatred, envy, strife – "works of the flesh and of the devil."

Saul's coming under an evil influence, by which he prophesied, seems to correspond thoroughly with the power of evil spirits exercised at various times in the past. And speaking of the power that Babylon will exhibit in the near future, the Lord tells us that the image of the beast will become so alive shortly that it will call down fire from heaven upon all opposed; that is to say, it will, apparently in the name and power of the Lord, express imprecations and fiery vengeance from the Almighty upon all who are not in full sympathy and accord with it. It may even seek to destroy us with the javelin of bitter words, misrepresentation and slander, as Saul threw his javelin twice at David. But as the latter was not smitten with the javelin, so we shall not be injured as New Creatures, no matter what the Lord may permit to come against us according to the flesh. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to the called ones according to his purpose" – to his anointed. His Word is, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets [ministers] no harm." (Psalm 105:15.) And again, "Nothing shall by any means hurt you," injure your real, highest interests.

"JEALOUSY IS CRUEL AS THE GRAVE"

These words of the wise man have been amply demonstrated as truthful through many centuries of the world's experience. Some one has said, "Jealousy is said to be the offspring of love. Yet, unless the parent makes haste to strangle the child, the child will not rest until it has poisoned the parent."

The lesson to the New Creation is that we should be specially on guard against jealousy, envy, hatred and strife. We cannot doubt that much of the final testing of the "very Elect" will be along these lines. **[R4219 : page 237]** "Who shall be able

to stand?" is a question, therefore, that appeals to all those who have taken their stand for the Lord, for righteousness, for truth – their stand for love of God and of the brethren. If, indeed, we have consecrated our lives, to lay down our lives in the service of the Lord and his truth and in the service of the brethren, what should it not mean to us as respects the manifestation of that love and faithfulness! Any root of bitterness, any word of bitterness, any thought of jealousy entering into our hearts might mean the defilement of not only the brother or sister against whom these are directed, but would surely mean the poisoning of our own hearts, the destruction therein of the spirit of love, the Spirit of the Lord; and possibly this evil spirit, far from the Lord, proceeding from us, might contaminate many members of the Body of Christ for their defilement. How much on guard, therefore, each of us ought to be; how we should analyze our thoughts, our motives, our intentions to see that they all square perfectly with the law of love to the extent that our Lord indicated, saying, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you;" to the extent of being willing to die for each other's interests and welfare and honor!

On the contrary the Spirit of the Lord in David kept him sweet, kind, generous toward his enemies. He indeed fled from the king's presence when in a fit of anger Saul threw the javelin, and we may be sure that it was nothing less than faith in the Lord and in his divine providence that enabled David to continue to serve the king as his musician, and by the sweet music of his heart and of his voice, to cheer Saul and drive away his melancholy. Such should be our attitude toward those who oppose us. The natural disposition of an evil course toward us would be to arouse an antagonistic spirit in return, render evil for evil, railing for railing, accusation for accusation. The result of such a course would be our own injury as well as the possibility of further injuring our opponents. David's course was the proper one; he waited upon the Lord, he was submissive to what the

Lord's providence permitted. In his estimation and ours nothing could befall him that would be outside the divine knowledge and the divine power to prevent. Hence these trying experiences meant for David a great development of character, a strengthening of his heart in harmony with the divine will.

PROVIDENTIAL CHANGES ACCEPTED

In various ways did Saul seek to arouse in David a spirit of antagonism; not only did he make an attempt to assassinate him twice, but he kept back from him a part of the promise he had publicly made, that the one who would gain the victory over Goliath should become his son-in-law. How foolishly shortsighted was Saul's course even up to this time! He might have fallen into line with the Lord's providences and have fulfilled his obligations to David, and by having David as a son-in-law, his own family would have been closely knit to that of David when the latter would ultimately come in possession of the kingly authority, as the Lord had ordained. But jealousy and hatred are usually blind to their own best interests. So Saul kept back his daughter from being the wife of David, and his next step was to send David to the army as the commander of a regiment, with the hope and the expectation that his boldness in war would mean his death. But the Lord was with David and blessed him, and the record is that "he behaved himself wisely in all his ways."

So with all those who now have the Lord's Spirit in still greater measure and power for the illumination of their minds, their hearts and their guidance in the right way. All these, under this heavenly influence and as sons of the Most High, should behave themselves wisely, prudently, in a manner to glorify their Father in heaven, to honor the Lord Jesus, to make themselves helpful to all the household of faith, and to let their lights so shine before men that the latter may take knowledge of the fact that they have been with Jesus and learned of him.

But the more wisely David conducted himself, the more envious did King Saul become. The more the Lord blessed and prospered David in his humility of life and wisdom, of course the more opposition did he have from the king. And so it will surely be with us. In proportion as we have the spirit of a sound mind and are zealous for the Lord and for the brethren, laying down our lives in the service of the truth, the more hatred and fear we may engender in the hearts of those who are out of heart-harmony with the Lord. But as we read of David that all Israel and Judah loved him, so we may be sure as respects the true people of God; for they are more and more loved and respected – those who have the Lord's Spirit, those who are of the David class. By and by when Satan shall have been bound, and when the Lord shall have established his Kingdom under the whole heaven, when all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears unstopped, then all the people, all who are in accord with the Lord, shall recognize the faithfulness of the David class, the Christ, and shall glorify God on their behalf.

"THE LORD GOD IS A SUN AND SHIELD"

Our Golden Text is a great encouragement to the David class, the beloved class, the anointed ones, the members of Christ. To these the Lord God is both a sun and shield; he not only enlightens these but he will not suffer them to be injured by the blessings which he bestows upon them. He will shield them from all enemies and everything that would tend to injure them in any manner; all things shall work together for good to those that love him, to the called ones according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28.) With such blessed assurances, then, we may look forward into the future with rejoicing and with confidence, trusting to have a share in the glorious rewards God has promised to the faithful.

As it would not have done for David merely to have thought about his anointing to be king and the blessing that would then come to him, so it would not do for us merely to think about the Kingdom honors that God has promised to the faithful, for in so doing we might be puffed up and thereby made unfit for a share in those coming blessings. Rather our attention, like that of David, must be directed to the things of the present, without, of course, forgetting the blessed influence of the coming prospects. It is ours to do with our might what our hands find to do at the present time, remembering that only thus can we make our calling and election sure.

As each step of opposition on the part of Saul worked out a blessing for David, giving him wider experiences and fitting and preparing him for his future usefulness as the king, so all of the trials and difficulties and the disappointments that the Lord will now permit to come upon us from the world, the flesh and the Adversary – all of these will prove but preparations for his glorious Kingdom privileges, if faithfully used.

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