

## The Lord's Standard Culpability Test

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once told the world how he looked forward to the day when his children would be judged, "...not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character...". When our society reaches that level of human rights, that will be one mighty good day!

The Lord, though, takes that a step even further, and He practices it right now, as should we all. God judges people not by their actions, intentions, deeds, material prosperity, etc. He judges us by our hearts.

In Criminal Law, there's always an element of "Intent" that's supposed to be considered in order to ascertain the "mens rea", the state of mind of the accused to determine the level of culpability. Well, the Lord's test is even more intrusive and precise, but it's a much better one for determining where we are in the Sanctification process. But there isn't a catchy name for it. He simply examines our hearts to determine the level of correction He's going to administer in order to get us to the next level, and it's a little different for each one of us. Isn't that amazing!

Here's where I think the test is set forth for the first, but by no means the last, time in the Bible. It was when the Lord sent Samuel, after rejecting Saul, to anoint David as the next King of Israel (at the time, David was a lowly, totally unrespected, shepherd boy tending to his father's sheep):

\*\* Note: I've been using "The Message" version of the Bible to study First Samuel because of the storytelling nature of First Samuel.

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### 1 Samuel 16 (MSG)

#### God Looks into the Heart

GOD addressed Samuel: "So, how long are you going to mope over Saul? You know I've rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your flask with anointing oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

<sup>2-3</sup> "I can't do that," said Samuel. "Saul will hear about it and kill me."

GOD said, "Take a heifer with you and announce, 'I've come to lead you in worship of GOD, with this heifer as a sacrifice.' Make sure Jesse gets invited. I'll let you know what to do next. I'll point out the one you are to anoint."

<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what GOD told him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the town fathers greeted him, but apprehensively. "Is there something wrong?"

<sup>5</sup> "Nothing's wrong. I've come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of GOD. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship." He made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.

<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Here he is! GOD's anointed!"

<sup>7</sup> But GOD told Samuel, “Looks aren’t everything. Don’t be impressed with his looks and stature. I’ve already eliminated him. GOD judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; GOD looks into the heart.”

<sup>8</sup> Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, “This man isn’t GOD’s choice either.”

<sup>9</sup> Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, “No, this man isn’t either.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, “GOD hasn’t chosen any of these.”

<sup>11</sup> Then he asked Jesse, “Is this it? Are there no more sons?”

“Well, yes, there’s the runt. But he’s out tending the sheep.”

Samuel ordered Jesse, “Go get him. We’re not moving from this spot until he’s here.”

<sup>12</sup> Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking.

GOD said, “Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one.”

<sup>13</sup> Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of GOD entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life.

Samuel left and went home to Ramah.

### **David—An Excellent Musician**

<sup>14</sup> At that very moment the Spirit of GOD left Saul and in its place a black mood sent by GOD settled on him. He was terrified.

<sup>15-16</sup> Saul’s advisors said, “This awful tormenting depression from God is making your life miserable. O Master, let us help. Let us look for someone who can play the harp. When the black mood from God moves in, he’ll play his music and you’ll feel better.”

<sup>17</sup> Saul told his servants, “Go ahead. Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me.”

<sup>18</sup> One of the young men spoke up, “I know someone. I’ve seen him myself: the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, an excellent musician. He’s also courageous, of age, well-spoken, and good-looking. And GOD is with him.”

<sup>19</sup> So Saul sent messengers to Jesse requesting, “Send your son David to me, the one who tends the sheep.”

<sup>20-21</sup> Jesse took a donkey, loaded it with a couple of loaves of bread, a flask of wine, and a young goat, and sent his son David with it to Saul. David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul liked him immediately and made him his right-hand man.

<sup>22</sup> Saul sent word back to Jesse: "Thank you. David will stay here. He's just the one I was looking for. I'm very impressed by him."

<sup>23</sup> After that, whenever the bad depression from God tormented Saul, David got out his harp and played. That would calm Saul down, and he would feel better as the moodiness lifted.

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I also very much like the nature of the discussions between the Lord and Samuel. They went "tit-for-tat" on the issues, and it makes for some very interesting and provocative reading. It also shows that the Lord is very very easy to talk to and get along with. He wants us to be ourselves when we come to Him, without any pretense whatsoever. Whether we're upset about something, or if we're happy about something, we just need to express that to Him just as we would to our very best friend.

I hope you have such an amazing day!!

- Jack