

Gadianton Robber/Secret Combinations

What is a Gadianton Robber?

A Gadianton Robber is someone who uses force, secrecy, and deceit to obtain power over other men. Gadianton Robbers lie, bribe, cheat, steal, make secret pacts and agreements, hold secret meetings to plan unethical and sometimes illegal actions, and worse:

"...Akish gathered in unto the house of Jared all his kinsfolk, and said unto them: Will ye swear unto me that ye will be faithful unto me in the thing which I shall desire of you? And it came to pass that they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens, and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head; and whoso should divulge whatsoever thing Akish made known unto them, the same should lose his life. And it came to pass that thus they did agree with Akish. And Akish did administer unto them the oaths which were given by them of old who also sought power, which had been handed down even from Cain, who was a murderer from the beginning. And they were kept up by the power of the devil to administer these oaths unto the people, to keep them in darkness, to help such as sought power to gain power, and to murder, and to plunder, and to lie, and to commit all manner of wickedness and whoredoms." (Ether 8:13-16)

"And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats--having usurped the power and authority of the land; laying aside the commandments of God, and not in the least aright before him; doing no justice unto the children of men; condemning the righteous because of their righteousness; letting the guilty and the wicked go unpunished because of their money; and moreover to be held in office at the head of government, to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills..." (Helaman 7:4-5)

Gadianton Robbers are predators who like to target the poor and those who are the weakest, or have the least influence, in a society. They take particular pleasure in persecuting those who refuse to join them in their iniquity:

"And... they [Gadianton Robbers in power] did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God." (Helaman 6:39)

Gadiantons who excel in their craft master the use of flattery and unethical promises to obtain followers and power. Consider the founder of the Book of Mormon Gadianton movement:

"For there was one Gadianton, who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery; therefore he became the leader of the band of Kishkumen. Therefore he did flatter them... that if they would place him in the judgment-seat he would

grant unto those who belonged to his band that they should be placed in power and authority among the people..." (Helaman 2:4-5)

The end goal of Gadianton-ism is to overthrow liberty:

"For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people..." (Ether 8:25)

For behold, they do study at this time that they may destroy the liberty of thy people, (for thus saith the Lord) which is contrary to the statutes, and judgments, and commandments which he has given unto his people. (Alma 8:17)

Gadianton-ism is simply a form of priestcraft. As the prophet Nephi wrote:

"He [the Lord] commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing..." (2 Nephi 26:29-30)

In summary, if you lie in order to obtain or retain political power over others, you are a Gadianton Robber. If you steal, cheat, or use the force of law to gain unjust advantage over your fellow man, you are a Gadianton Robber. If you make unspoken or secret agreements with other people to hide or conceal immoral and unethical activities, you are a Gadianton Robber. If you accept or give out money or special privileges in exchange for political favors, you are a Gadianton Robber.

What motivates a Gadianton Robber?

Gadianton Robbers are motivated by a lust for power and praise of other men; "...to rule and do according to their wills, that they might get gain and glory of the world, and, moreover, that they might the more easily commit adultery, and steal, and kill, and do according to their own wills..." (Helaman 7:5)

"But behold, it is to get again, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity." (Helaman 7:21)

Do Gadianton Robbers operate in complete secrecy?

Only in the beginning. Gadianton Robbers prefer to work in secrecy, but as society erodes, they become more bold and open. Gadianton Robbers tend to arise out of more populated areas, where it is easier to hide:

"...There was continual peace established in the land, all save it were the secret combinations which Gadianton the robber had established in the more settled parts of the land, which at that time were not known unto those who

were at the head of government; therefore they were not destroyed out of the land." (Helaman 3:23)

As their numbers and influence increase, things that were once done strictly behind closed doors are done more openly. Robbers who excel at their craft are careful to ride the ever-retreating line of what is "acceptable to the masses," or what they can get away with. Consider the Gadianton judges of Zarahemla who attempted to put away the prophet Nephi for exposing their wickedness:

"And now it came to pass that when Nephi had said these words, behold, there were men who were judges, who also belonged to the secret band of Gadianton, and they were angry, and they cried out against him, saying unto the people: Why do ye not seize upon this man and bring him forth, that he may be condemned according to the crime which he has done? Why seest thou this man, and hearest him revile against this people and against our law? For behold, Nephi had spoken unto them concerning the corruptness of their law; yea, many things did Nephi speak which cannot be written; and nothing did he speak which was contrary to the commandments of God. And those judges were angry with him because he spake plainly unto them concerning their secret works of darkness; nevertheless, they durst not lay their own hands upon him, for they feared the people lest they should cry out against them. Therefore they did cry unto the people, saying: Why do you suffer this man to revile against us? For behold he doth condemn all this people, even unto destruction; yea, and also that these our great cities shall be taken from us, that we shall have no place in them. And now we know that this is impossible, for behold, we are powerful, and our cities great, therefore our enemies can have no power over us. And it came to pass that thus they did stir up the people to anger against Nephi, and raised contentions among them; for there were some who did cry out: Let this man alone, for he is a good man, and those things which he saith will surely come to pass except we repent; yea, behold, all the judgments will come upon us which he has testified unto us; for we know that he has testified aright unto us concerning our iniquities. And behold they are many, and he knoweth as well all things which shall befall us as he knoweth of our iniquities; yea, and behold, if he had not been a prophet he could not have testified concerning those things. And it came to pass that those people who sought to destroy Nephi were compelled because of their fear, that they did not lay their hands on him... (Helaman 8:1-10)

Robbers are calculated, intelligent smooth talkers--catering to the whims and baser desires of the people they are attempting to manipulate. Here is the description of the lawyers of Ammonihah who sought legal excuse to incarcerate and persecute the prophet Alma:

"Nevertheless, there were some among them who thought to question them, that by their cunning devices they might catch them in their words, that they might find witness against them, that they might deliver them to their judges that they might be judged according to the law, and that they might be slain or cast into prison, according to the crime which they could make appear or witness against them. Now it was those men who sought to destroy them, who were lawyers, who were hired or appointed by the people to administer the law at their times of trials, or at the trials of the crimes of the people before the judges. Now these lawyers were learned in all the arts and cunning of the people; and this was to enable them that they might be skilful in their profession. And it came to pass that they began to

question Amulek, that thereby they might make him cross his words, or contradict the words which he should speak." (Alma 10:13-16)

Can Gadianton Robbers be respected members of the community?

Can they hold high political office? Can they be members, or even leaders, of any faith that claims to follow Jesus Christ?

Yes. Consider the following:

"And thus they did obtain the sole management of the government, insomuch that they did trample under their feet and smite and rend and turn their backs upon the poor and the meek, and the humble followers of God." (Helaman 6:39)

"And seeing the people in a state of such awful wickedness, and those Gadianton robbers filling the judgment-seats having usurped the power and authority of the land..." (Helaman 7:4)

"...There were men who were judges, who also belonged to the secret band of Gadianton... And those judges were angry with him because he spake plainly unto them concerning their secret works of darkness..." (Helaman 8:1,4)

"Now there were many of the people who were exceedingly angry because of those who testified of these things; and those who were angry were chiefly the chief judges, and they who had been high priests and lawyers; yea, all those who were lawyers were angry with those who testified of these things. Now there was no lawyer nor judge nor high priest that could have power to condemn any one to death save their condemnation was signed by the governor of the land. Now there were many of those who testified of the things pertaining to Christ who testified boldly, who were taken and put to death secretly by the judges, that the knowledge of their death came not unto the governor of the land until after their death. Now behold, this was contrary to the laws of the land, that any man should be put to death except they had power from the governor of the land--therefore a complaint came up unto the land of Zarahemla, to the governor of the land, against these judges who had condemned the prophets of the Lord unto death, not according to the law. Now it came to pass that they were taken and brought up before the judge, to be judged of the crime which they had done, according to the law which had been given by the people. Now it came to pass that those judges had many friends and kindreds; and the remainder, yea, even almost all the lawyers and the high priests, did gather themselves together, and unite with the kindreds of those judges who were to be tried according to the law. (3 Nephi 6:21-27)

Can Gadianton Robbers exist in our enlightened age? in our own state and nation?

The prophet Nephi writes the following of our day and society:

"They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are

led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men." (2 Nephi 2:14)

Nephi continues later:

"And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor. And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice. And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever." (2 Nephi 26:20-22)

The prophet Moroni is even more specific about the broad scope of our problems today:

"And now I, Moroni, do not write the manner of their oaths and combinations, for it hath been made known unto me that they are had among all people, and they are had among the Lamanites." (Ether 8:20)

No matter what the society or religion, if the people in it do not remain righteous and vigilant, Gadianton Robbers will organize and eventually destroy that society. The devil will take whatever inroads the people give him:

"And behold, it is he [the devil] who is the author of all sin. And behold, he doth carry on his works of darkness and secret murder, and doth hand down their plots, and their oaths, and their covenants, and their plans of awful wickedness, from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men." (Helaman 6:30)

In any society or religion, if the shepherds fall asleep, ravenous wolves will enter the flock and destroy it.

"For what shepherd is there among you having many sheep doth not watch over them, that the wolves enter not and devour his flock? And behold, if a wolf enter his flock doth he not drive him out? Yea, and at the last, if he can, he will destroy him. And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed." (Alma 5:59-60)

The only way to remain vigilant is to place God and His righteousness above other men--or the arm of flesh. As Alma warned:

"Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another... Even so I desire that ye should stand fast in the liberty wherewith ye have been made free, and that ye trust no man to be a king over you. And also trust no one to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments." (Mosiah 23:7,13-14)

Can average citizens become Gadianton Robbers? If so, how?

It is very easy. All you have to do is to knowingly support and encourage those who lie, steal, cheat, or who secretly do evil to obtain power over others.

Do you look the other way and continue to support a political, religious, or business authority who commits an immoral, unethical act? Do you believe that you are a decent, respectable citizen for doing so? Do you personally gain prestige or influence by your actions? You have been seduced into being a complicit party in helping that person retain unjust power and influence.
YOU ARE A GADIANTON ROBBER:

"And it came to pass on the other hand, that the Nephites did build them up and support them, beginning at the more wicked part of them, until they had overspread all the land of the Nephites, and had seduced the more part of the righteous until they had come down to believe in their works and partake of their spoils, and to join with them in their secret murders and combinations." (Helaman 6:38)

One Book of Mormon robber, Giddianhi, explained the lure and attraction of joining the Gadianton society:

"...Yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us--not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance." (3 Nephi 3:7)

What will become of Gadianton Robbers and those who support, join, or otherwise uphold them?

The Lord is very clear about the destruction that awaits Gadianton Robbers and those who uphold them:

"Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton! Yea, wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceedingly great riches!" (Helaman 7:25-26)

"Yea, even at this time ye are ripening, because of your murders and your fornication and wickedness, for everlasting destruction; yea, and except ye repent it will come unto you soon." (Helaman 8:26)

"And again, the Lord God hath commanded that men should not murder; that they should not lie; that they should not steal; that they should not take the name of the Lord their God in vain; that they should not envy; that they should not have malice; that they should not contend one with another; that they should not commit whoredoms; and that they should do none of these things; for whoso doeth them shall perish." (2 Nephi 26:32)

Evidently, mankind will fail to destroy the many secret combinations among us:

Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, shall perish; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth; for they who are not for me are against me, saith our God. (2 Nephi 10:15-16)

America is particularly vulnerable to the arm of God's justice:

"For behold, there is a curse upon all this land, that destruction shall come upon all those workers of darkness, according to the power of God, when they are fully ripe; therefore I desire that this people might not be destroyed... Yea, and cursed be the land forever and ever unto those workers of darkness and secret combinations, even unto destruction, except they repent before they are fully ripe.
" (Alma 37:28-31)

Eventually, all of the lies and secret works of darkness will be revealed in broad daylight:

"There is nothing which is secret save it shall be revealed; there is no work of darkness save it shall be made manifest in the light; and there is nothing which is sealed upon the earth save it shall be loosed." (2 Nephi 30:17)

Conclusion

"Wherefore, O ye Gentiles, it is wisdom in God that these things should be shown unto you, that thereby ye may repent of your sins, and suffer not that these murderous combinations shall get above you, which are built up to get power and gain--and the work, yea, even the work of destruction come upon you, yea, even the sword of the justice of the Eternal God shall fall upon you, to your overthrow and destruction if ye shall suffer these things to be. Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation, because of this secret combination which shall be among you; or wo be unto it, because of the blood of them who have been slain; for they cry from the dust for vengeance upon it, and also upon those who built it up. For it cometh to pass that whoso buildeth it up seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries; and it bringeth to pass the destruction of all people, for it is built up by the devil, who is the father of all lies; even that same liar who beguiled our first parents, yea, even that same liar who hath caused man to commit murder from the beginning; who hath hardened the hearts of men that they have murdered the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out from the beginning. Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved." (Ether 8:23-26)