



FEED MY SHEEP

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Would Second Place Be Alright With You?

Long-time readers of FMS know that we almost never quote or refer to letters-to-the-editor in these monthly monographs. On this occasion we are making an exception because the reader/letter-writer probably expresses the sentiment of more than a few FMS readers. And the topic of his letter is directly related to our subject matter, the character of David. This reader was apparently troubled by learning just how human David was. Indeed, for quite some time, we have been chronicling the life of David in the FMS and we have been learning that he was truly a man beset with all manner of temptations. Not only was he tempted, but he fell into moral lapses severely on more than one occasion. Thus, the reader commented “I am having trouble reconciling the ‘greatness’ of King David and his actions. Perhaps he was no worse than our present-day rulers—just earlier!”

Well, frankly, if it were possible, I personally would rather have David as our president than any of the 40-plus presidents we have had in this nation. True, he had character flaws; he was as human as you and I. The Savior is often referred to as “the Greater David”—for many reasons. Jesus is the Greater David because He will take the throne of David and rule in a greater way. He will rule with perfection. He will rule over a greater territory: the whole earth and universe. He will rule for a greater amount of time. David was tempted and fell upon occasion. Jesus is also the Greater David because He did not fall or fail as David did. The writer of Hebrews wrote of Him as our great high priest.

Hebrews 4: 14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Because Jesus did not fall as Adam and David, He was qualified to make the sacrifice and be the sacrifice for sin, and to be the intercessor on our behalf so that we as believers in His accomplished work can...

16 ... therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

So yes, David had human failings, but one of the key character qualities that set him apart from King Saul was his attitude: his humility before God, his submission to God’s chastisement, and his complete trust in the sovereignty of God; i.e., that whatever God had ordained for his life, David would say “amen” to it. Moreover, David repented from his gross evil deeds and did not repeat them. (Some of his less serious character flaws he seemed to have trouble eliminating. Can we not relate to that as well?) So while we have had a number of FMS issues recently which have shown the “warts” in David’s character, we now come to an incident in his life in which he demonstrates that very “greatness” which our correspondent had seemingly found lacking in him.

Recall that we are now at the point in the story where David’s rebellious son, Absalom, has marshaled what must have been a very formidable army. With it, he had invaded Jerusalem. David, having been advised in advance, had called for an evacuation

of the city by any and all of his subjects who desired to go with him and the royal retinue. They are now traveling through the land of Benjamin past the Mount of Olives and they arrive at a town, Bahurim, located between Jerusalem and Jericho.

2 Samuel 16: 5 And when king David came to Bahurim behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.

6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men *were* on his right hand and on his left.

7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:

Picture this scene: Here is David, leaving Jerusalem with a large contingent of highly trained troops surrounding him. They are walking along a ravine, and suddenly there is Shimei walking along the ridge on one side of the ravine, and he is ranting and raving, shouting vile curses upon David, throwing stones and kicking dirt upon David and his company down in the ravine.

Seeing that David is surrounded by his Army Rangers and Navy Seals—the elite martial experts in Israel—this Shimei fellow has to be a few gallons short of a full tank to do such things to the king. Even though Shimei appears to be crazy, nonetheless, notice that he tells David that the rebellion of Absalom is a judgment of God for David’s sins...which was true.

Furthermore, what does God’s law decree as the penalty for lying carnally with another man’s wife? The death penalty. And how are they to be executed? By stoning! (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:24, et al.) So David probably recognized Shimei’s action as a token judgment of being stoned to death. David thanked God that He had spared him from death—while at the same time, David might also have been thinking he wasn’t out of the woods yet because if Absalom did pursue and catch up to him, then he would surely be executed after all. So the small stones flung by Shimei stung, to be sure. But the figurative stones hurled by Amnon, and now Absalom and Ahithophel, are crushing blows to David. Shimei continues his maniacal tirade against David.

8 the LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou *art taken* in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.

David *was* a bloody man. He had ordered the death of Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah. Shimei, of course, did not have clean hands either. It is clear that his motive for “stoning” David was out of pride and jealousy. Had the monarchy not been transferred to David of the tribe of Judah, Shimei concludes that his own lot in life would have been much better off since he was of the tribe of Benjamin, indeed of Saul’s royal family.

It did not take long for Shimei’s stone-throwing to provoke the Rangers and Seals to ask David’s permission to eliminate the threat. “Mr. President, do you want us to take him out?” Incidentally, verse 9 tells us that it is Abishai who offers to eliminate the “national security” threat. Do you remember how Abishai fits in the family tree of David? We refer you to the genealogy chart of David’s family which we printed in the August, 2006 issue, FMS # 93. (Downloadable from our website, if you misplaced it.)

Consulting the chart, you will find that Zeruiah was David’s sister; and therefore, Abishai was David’s nephew and also the brother of General Joab. Remember also that the third brother, Asahel, was the foolish young soldier who had tried to make a name for himself by assassinating former King Ishbosheth’s General Abner, but Abner killed Asahel instead. The tragedy was then compounded when Joab assassinated Abner in revenge. So Joab and Abishai are apparently chief among David’s loyalists as they retreat from their capital at Jerusalem.

9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?

Do you see how David recognizes the hand of God in this event?

11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now *may this Benjamite do it?* let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him.

12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day.

13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust.

14 And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

Let us look at this Shimei incident as it can apply to us today. We all have our "Shimei's," those who see themselves as our enemies, for whatever reason. There are several ways we can react to the "crazy" enemy: Use intimidation or power, might, or physical force to neutralize your enemy. Or..., do as David did and hear the voice of God in your enemy!

Our willingness to listen to our critics, even hostile persons who have very ill intent towards us, may be the only way to obtain God's truth on a given matter. When you are confronted by your Shimei's, you have a choice. Will you intimidate or crush him in any way you can, so as to avoid pain? Or will you consider that just maybe God is speaking to you through your Shimei?

Finally, David and his band of not-so-merry men and their families have passed beyond Shimei and they are now in the wilderness again. The wilderness—that place and time of testing of our character before one can enter the Promised Land. Oh,...*did some of us begin to think we have only one wilderness experience on this earth?* Not at all. We find that as we pass one test successfully, we come to another level where we will be challenged to an even greater degree. We find that we can never come to the place where we can claim to have eliminated (for example) pride—that we now "have this humility thing down pat." Because the moment we think such a thought and seriously believe it is the moment that we can be sure that we have not eliminated the vice of pride yet. It is like forgiveness. It will be a life-long endeavor. We can only say "we have arrived" when we awake in the resurrection in an immortal body.

The resurrection to immortality will initiate our

true "rest work." David and company are now at a temporary place of rest and refreshment in a wilderness, so we will take this opportunity to refresh some of our recent lessons and gain some perspective of this lengthy overall study.

During this entire course of these studies on Saul and David, one of our primary purposes has been to point out the character qualities of these men; qualities which show us on the one hand, that if we emulate Saul, we will not be overcomers, plain and simple. We may believe in Jesus. We may go to church. We may even support the work of God with our money, but if we do all that and our heart is permeated with bitterness, resentment, jealousy, unforgiveness and so on, then we are surely going to be part of the *non-overcomer* class. On the other hand, if we emulate the plethora of virtues exhibited in the life of David, including forgiveness of one's enemies, love instead of hatred, joy for another's achievements instead of jealousy, kindness instead of slander and gossip, and on and on; if our heart is practiced with these beautiful fruits of the Spirit, then we have the possibility of being classed among the overcomers.

As I said, that has been the major theme of all these studies. But now let me throw you a curve. As Christians practicing to be overcomers, many of you have shared with me by letter and in person just how difficult it is to actually exhibit these fruits on a daily basis—especially that one about truly forgiving those who hate you, and those who spitefully use you, and especially when they are in your own family or among your close acquaintances. I can hear your chorus of agreement with that statement. We all relate to that.

Yes, it is very difficult. As I have said before, that is why it is called "overcoming!" But now, let me ask you to consider something that is perhaps even more difficult to achieve—which is a certain state of heart which requires a truly humble and righteous spirit. To explicate this concept, we will return to one of what I consider to be the key passages of the past several issues of FMS.

2 Samuel 15:25 And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and show me *both* it, and his habitation:

26 But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

You see, David had passed the overcomer test in his experiences with Saul. He had opportunity to kill Saul on two occasions, but he chose to forgive that tortured soul and let God either keep Saul in place or remove him from his position of authority in God's own timing.

However, as we have seen previously, David fell hard in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah. And now he recognizes that his present circumstances, and all his family problems: his son Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar, the murder of Amnon by his half-brother Absalom, and the subsequent attempt by Absalom to usurp the throne of his father—that all of that is part of the judgment which Nathan the prophet had told him would come upon him. So at this juncture, David gives us another picture of the attitude of one who is truly an overcomer...a truly humble spirit.

It is the attitude that "Father, I am a sinner. I do not deserve your mercy. Nonetheless, I throw myself on Your mercy, and if You should choose to restore me to the throne, I will praise You. But if not, I will praise You anyway, even if you discard me from my position of authority." You see, as with David, the throne, the position of authority, is what the overcomers are given in the first resurrection. Of the overcomers, it is said...

Revelation 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Are we like David? Perhaps many among my readers can silently admit that he or she has also fallen so grievously somewhere in life that we have assumed that by doing so, we have disqualified our self from the overcomer class. But note: David did not quit striving! He continued to try to please the Father with all his heart and might and strength (of character). That puts us all in the same situation as David was, as described in the 2 Samuel 15:26 above. Therefore, can we say to our Father that—although we might strive with all our might the rest of our lives—that, like David, we are willing even then, after all that striving, willing to be classed with the *non-overcomers*!? To attain to second place in the kingdom of heaven?

Can we be so surrendered to Father's Plan that we can joyfully acknowledge His sovereignty if He should say, "I have no delight in thee?" Can we accept with all humility that maybe, just maybe, we

might end up in the *non-overcomer* class after all? I think if we are truly overcomer candidates, then somewhere along our path of spiritual growth, we need to be able to say that. Because we have a New Testament example of exactly that. Listen to the apostle Paul's words.

Romans 9:1 I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,

2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

4 Who are Israelites;

Did you hear that? Do you understand what Paul is saying? He is so desirous of his brother Israelites coming to Christ that he says he is willing to trade his own high calling in salvation for the sake of his brethren! He was not merely demoting himself to the *non-overcomer* class of believers here; he was willing to be placed with the accursed and suffer the lake of fire for the sake of his brethren. But lest you think Paul was willing to suffer eternal torment in the fiery hell taught by many churches today, I assure you Paul was not volunteering for any such horrendous fate. He understood the truth about "hell." No space here to elaborate. We have a 10-tape or 10-CD album dealing with hell and final annihilationism. (\$33 ppd. Order album A-103, specify tape or CD format.)

No one is asking you to go as far as Paul did—but can we surrender to the Father as David did? ... so that we can be willing to receive second place, to not be awarded with the high crown, *if* that is Father's design? I want to leave you with that thought to ponder because such a commitment will take some honest soul-searching before any of us can truly say "alright" or "amen" to that possibility. May God bless you!

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