



FEED MY SHEEP

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David, a Type of Christ, Offers Universal Forgiveness

At the conclusion of the last issue of FMS, we encountered one of the most poignant and grief-filled episodes in the Bible: the time when word was brought to King David that his evil and errant—yet much beloved—son, Absalom had been killed in the rebellion which Absalom had mounted against his father. At this point, David is wholly unaware that his own nephew and top general, Joab, had in reality, murdered Absalom, as he hung helplessly from the limbs of a great oak tree.

2 Samuel 19:1 And it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

2 And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son.

3 And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle.

Can you imagine the consternation of David's armies? The revolt had been squelched; the murderous leader of the rebellion had been executed. The armies felt like exulting in gladness and joy over the victory and yet they can hardly do so when their own leader is wailing over the death of the enemy. They are perplexed.

4 But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!

Someone needed to be brave enough to confront the king, to jolt him back into reality. Once again, General Joab steps up to the plate to do the dirty and dan-

gerous work of confronting the king. However, recall also that from the very beginning of David's accession to the throne—indeed, while still running from Saul, that it seemed that nephew Joab had some kind of mysterious power over David which David had never been able to shake off or overcome.

Joab was, in a sense, the Rasputin in David's palace. Gregory Rasputin was a Russian Orthodox monk, born of peasant stock in 1871 in the Tobolsk province of Siberia. At age 33, he left his wife and family to become a priest-monk. His strange mental (some say "occult") abilities enabled him to come to the attention of the court of Czar Nicholas II of Russia in the early 1900's.

Rasputin's mysterious, spellbinding power was seemingly exercised not only over the Czar, but especially over his wife, Empress Alexandra. The many who opposed Rasputin in the court alleged that he had a very evil influence on both church politics as well as the national and foreign policies followed by Czar Nicholas. Eventually, no appointments to high office were made with his consultation and approval. Consequently, Rasputin was labeled the "mad monk" and he was murdered in December of 1916.

Joab seemed to have this Rasputin-like hold over David. In fact, while David did need jolted back to reality from Joab's perspective, his (Joab's) underlying motive was to continue his measure of control over the king. In all the many incidents we have seen in our studies thus far concerning Joab, we can safely state that Joab's motives were never pure. He sometimes did the right thing, but it was always conven-

iently in his own personal interests of maintaining power and control. Is it not amazing how God uses certain players on the stage to do the necessary and difficult work, but at the same time, those players have their own agenda (or so they think). As the Scripture saith, there is none righteous, no, not one. Now comes Joab's rebuke to David.

5 And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines;

Joab has a good point because, had Absalom been successful, it is quite likely that he would have executed every possible contender for the throne and their families. It would not be the first time. In the book of Judges, chapter 9, is the account of one of the sons of Gideon who murdered all sixty-nine of his brothers and half-brothers for that very same reason (except one who escaped). Joab is making sense here.

6 In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends. For thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

Pretty strong stuff to be telling the king to his face. It could have been done less offensively, but I think Joab secretly relished this moment of putting it to David. Joab had said: "Thou regardest not princes..." Those would be Absalom's half-brothers, including Solomon, all of them potential rivals for the throne. Had Absalom won the day, David's whole family including Solomon and Bathsheba and David himself would have been executed. This was beginning to get through to David now. Joab continues:

7 Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably [kindly] unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now.

It had finally sunk in. Joab is correct, thought David. If I don't pull out of this depression and take charge over the nation once again, they all will lose

faith and trust in me.

8 Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

At this point, David is still on the east side of Jordan in the city of Mahanaim. When it says "all the people came before the king," it refers to those who had remained loyal and had gone with David and especially those who had fought for him. They come to him to express their continued allegiance to him and to hear the king commend them for their courage in battle and for their faithfulness to him.

"Israel had fled every man to his tent" refers to those—probably the vast majority of the nation—who had fought on the rebels' side. They are trying to fade back into the woodwork, as it were, in the hopes of avoiding punishment.

There is an additional point to be made concerning Joab's sharp upbraiding of David. We saw many chapters ago how a man of God, Nathan the prophet, was sent by God to rebuke David concerning his fornication with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah.

Then also not too many issues back, we saw in the case of Shimei's cursing of David, how God sometimes speaks to us through ungodly persons, or people whom we consider to be our enemies. I challenged us to be prepared to hear the voice of God through our enemies. We have another example of that here in the very unscrupulous and unprincipled Joab being the mouthpiece used by God to impel David to cease his non-stop grieving and take charge of the kingdom once again, lest he lose it altogether.

Meanwhile, the elders back in Israel began arguing among themselves, some trying to convince the others that they had better be quick to once more profess allegiance to David in the hope of a merciful attitude from him.

9 And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom.

10 And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?

David hears of the petitions for leniency from the northern tribes but David's first priority was to seek reinstatement among his own tribe of Judah, many of whom had been among the first to side with Absalom. (Recall how I described Absalom's political rally in Hebron as being akin to a big Texas barbecue combined with a Nuremberg rally.)

11 And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house.

12 Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king?

Well, you can imagine the fear and reluctance on the part of the elders of Judah who had been part of the rebellion. They were deathly scared that if they approached David, that he would have them executed for treason, as in fact, they truly deserved. No wonder they are so slow to make the first move. So it was David who took the initiative. He sent the high priests Zadok and Abiathar to carry the word of conciliation to the rebels. I use that word "conciliation" deliberately. In our CD/tape series of lectures on biblical universal reconciliation, we learned that there was a very important distinction between "conciliation" and "reconciliation." We found a number of places in the New Testament where it was mistranslated as "reconciliation" and it should have been "conciliation." The importance of that distinction is too involved to discuss here. (The 12-CD or audiotape album is available for \$40 ppd. Ask for album A-104, *Universal Reconciliation*.)

Just as God takes the initiative and *conciliates* sinners by sending them word that the work of salvation has been done, so David here takes the initiative and tells the fearful Judahite rebels that their sin of treason has been forgiven. David sent this word through his *ambassadors*, Zadok and Abiathar. Essentially, the two high priests were saying to the rebels of Judah that the king is wondering what is taking you so long to invite him back again as your king. Thus, David had mercy on the rebels. *He forgave them one and all*. He allowed them all back into his good graces

once again. We could say that here David practiced universal reconciliation! Please understand that there is nothing perfect in the type and shadow here. On the practical level, David is clearly doing the wise thing politically in almost every one of these cases, except that of General Amasa. (More later on him.) Nevertheless, the shadow of universal reconciliation is evident.

Through the course of those audio lecture studies on universal reconciliation some years back, we understand now how this incident is a type of its extension to all creation. David extended his conciliation to his own family first in the person of his nephew Amasa; then to his entire tribe of Judah, and then to Shimei the Benjamite and finally to all Israel. In our studies on universal reconciliation, we learned how God conciliates Israel first, then all Adam's race, and finally extends it to all creation. Each in its own order. Each in its own proper time. (We set this forth in our book, *Sacred Secrets of the Sovereignty of God*, \$24 ppd.) All the foregoing is on the corporate level of fulfillment.

On the personal level, the pattern holds likewise, because it is in our individual, spiritual lives where God takes the initiative with us. Like the Judahites, we are all rebellious sinners. We are all ashamed. We have all "slunk" back to our tents, trying to stay out of the way of an *angry* God. That is precisely how many churches have taught us to see Him; i.e., almost exclusively as an *angry* God. Hellfire and eternal torture await you, if you are not good enough. But God our King and our Father sends word to us by His High Priest, Jesus, that we can be reconciled with Him. It is an act of pure mercy. Just as the rebels of Judah and Israel deserved death, so do we all as sinners before God. But our heavenly Father extends His grace and forgiveness through Christ to one and all. We simply need to accept it. After that, we as God's Israel people become *ambassadors* for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

One man in particular, though, David's nephew, Amasa, might have been particularly fearful. Remember, he was Absalom's cousin, and Absalom had made him his top general in the rebellion. But look at how David extends the olive branch of peace to him. David is still instructing his ambassadors, Zadok and Abiathar, on what to say.

13 And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me

continually in the room of Joab.

My, oh my! What is happening here? What a bold and surprising move! Not only is David telling Amasa that he will not be put to death for treason, but that he is being promoted right to the top post in David's military command structure, replacing General Joab. In our nation, it is the equivalent of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff being summarily sacked and replaced—a humiliating blow to Joab. In the natural realm, this was not a wise move on David's part. You see, David had had just about all he could take of the domineering Joab—despite the fact that we have seen that not everything Joab did to the displeasure of David was necessarily wrong. Some of it was just plain dirty work that somebody needed to do. Nonetheless, David uses this as a means to demote Joab and hopefully rid himself of his Rasputin.

But here is a very key question: Did David wait to make his offer until the rebel general, Amasa, came forth in repentance to him? No, he did not. Again, we notice that it was David taking the initiative. Therefore, from a types and shadows perspective, we can see from the case of this unconditional forgiveness of General Amasa how a person can be a leader in the fight against God, and yet be rewarded with one of the highest positions of leadership in the kingdom. A high-ranking overcomer, if you will. That is quite astonishing!

Someone might think that is quite a stretch, but yet in the New Testament, we have a very prominent example of exactly that in the case of the apostle Paul. Saul—before he became Paul—was a fierce enemy of God. He did not come down to the altar voluntarily and sign a pledge card, did he? No, “God knocked him off his high horse” on the road to Damascus. But by the end of Paul's life, it is quite clear that Paul himself believed that God would reward him with a better resurrection, the high calling of the overcomers.

And so the obvious little lesson here—but yet so very important—is that no matter how terrible a sinner one has been, there is a merciful Father waiting for you to accept the conciliation. But not only that, He is a Father who just might want to bless your socks off once you do accept it. What a gracious God we serve! As the next verse tells us, David's message of forgiveness and conciliation was very well received by the people of Judah.

14 And he bowed [turned] the heart of all the men of Judah, even as *the heart of one man*; so that they sent *this word* unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants.

What effect did David's universal mercy and forgiveness have upon all the rebels of Judah? Their hearts were all turned back to him with one accord. Their fears were dissolved. They felt nothing but overwhelming love for their king. Can you not see that picture applied eventually to all mankind? God's grace, mercy and love will overwhelm *everyone's* rebellious will. What a King we have in Jesus! What a Father-God!

2 Samuel 19: 15 So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

There is another theme which is evident here in the types and shadows. Biblically speaking, the Jordan river is a symbol for death. Crossing the Jordan typifies passing through death's door. ... Oh, by the way, there a television show called *Crossing Jordan*. I watched it once or twice because the name was so fascinating. It centers around a woman doctor named Jordan who works as a coroner. In other words, this show, centered around death, is called *Crossing Jordan*. Do you think the producers did that on purpose? What a coincidence...or not!

In any case, here we have a death and resurrection theme because David is coming back across Jordan. Would this perhaps be a type of the second coming of Christ in some ways? Probably, but it is certainly evident that it saw some fulfillments in the first coming of Christ. We will pursue that thought later. As David and his retinue arrive at the Jordan river, look who shows up. It's Shimei, the professional curser, stone-thrower and dirt-kicker! Remember him doing those things to David as he was crossing Jordan to flee from Absalom?

(To be continued.)

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