



FEED MY SHEEP

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Overcomers Are Forgivers

We are continuing our studies looking at the respective characters traits of Saul and David. In recent issues of FMS we have seen how Saul has become consumed with murderous envy of David and he has been plotting in numerous ways to have David killed. The saga now continues in that vein as Saul's son, Prince Jonathan, now re-enters the scene.

KJV 1 Samuel 19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

Chapter 19 begins a new series of incidents in the saga of Saul and David. We are not told how long it was after the incident in the previous chapter, but up until this point, the king had kept to himself his ultimate goal of having David killed.

True, he had ordered his servants to do this and that which had the *possibility* of bringing about David's death, but this is the first time that Saul openly states his goal both to his servants and to his son, Prince Jonathan. Upon first hearing the plot, Jonathan wisely holds his tongue until he can report to David of his continuing and imminent danger.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

So Jonathan advises David to steer clear of Saul until Jonathan has the chance to talk to his father after he cools down. Then in the morning Jonathan will arrange to speak to his father in the field where David will have the opportunity to hear for himself of Saul's evil designs. So Jonathan waits until Saul simmers down and then rebukes him for his malignant plot to murder a man who has served him with unwavering loyalty and fervor.

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and YHWH wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As YHWH liveth, he shall not be slain.

Saul is obviously still capable of desiring to do right and so he vows to forsake his evil plot.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

We see then, that for some unspecified period of time, it was safe for David to return to the king's court. The contrast between the two chief characters

here is like night and day. On the one hand, we see the pathetic portrait of Saul who is dancing on the tight-rope, on the border between a sound mind and insanity. He is clearly what is today called schizophrenic and perhaps manic-depressive and compulsive. But never mind all the psychological terms. The Bible informed us that God had sent an evil spirit upon him. It comes and goes, resulting in his extreme double-mindedness.

On the other hand, we see David, who has displayed numerous virtues and, at this point, where he is going back into the court of a man who wished to kill him only yesterday, David is *again* displaying loyalty to his master, to his king. But it is also clear that David has to be possessed of an abundant spirit of *forgiveness* toward Saul. David is totally willing to wipe the slate clean and, in effect, tell Saul. "We can start over. I will not hold your previous evil actions and intents against you. I forgive you completely."

The virtue of forgiveness is one of the chief character qualities necessary for anyone who aspires to be an overcomer. It is the application of the laws of the jubilee. We produced four taped lectures on the jubilee concept some years ago (tape #'s 271, 272, 275 & 276). We also devoted five *Feed My Sheep* monographs to it (#'s 33 through 37), albeit not on as deep a level as in the tapes.

Forgiveness is one of the most easily available character qualities to practice and yet it is without doubt one of the most difficult to truly achieve. It is readily available to all of us because the prerequisite for practicing forgiveness is that we need to have been hurt or offended. Is there anyone who has not been hurt or offended in the past couple of days? Probably *most* of us have had our feelings hurt in the past 12 hours. So our opportunities to forgive arise frequently.

While we all have some idea of what forgiveness entails, are we truly able to forgive others as Christ forgave? I certainly do not claim perfection in that area—or in any area, for that matter—but Father did take me through some experiences which I believe taught me the meaning of *true* forgiveness. I shared that testimony in 1996, and that two-tape message is available to anyone who writes and asks for it. It is tapes #'s 259 & 260. It is entitled: *Could You Forgive God? My Personal Testimony on Forgiveness.*

The two primary experiences which I relate in

the story are #1: how I hated my earthly father for nearly three decades. He passed away September 10, 2000. The second major experience which God used to teach me about forgiveness was the suffering and ultimate death at age 13 of our oldest daughter, Sarah. That occurred in 1990. Judging from the feedback we have had over the years, that message has had more of a profound impact on the lives of the listeners than any other single message we have ever given.

Forgiveness is a paramount mark of the character of David, and as such, forgiveness must be part of the character repertoire of anyone who would be an overcomer. How do you measure up? Do you know how to fully and completely forgive those who hurt you? How about those who hurt you *over and over again*? How about the wounds from your friends? For many of us, it is when our friends and loved ones become our enemies that forgiveness is most difficult.

In our contrasting the character marks of David and Saul, let us not overlook the complex position of Jonathan. We are referring back to verses 4 & 5. Here is a picture of a man who is trying to dance on a different kind of tightrope. Jonathan is a godly man, very stable mentally and spiritually. But he is trying to do a balancing act between his filial obligations to his father, who happens to be the king, and his *agape* love for his friend David.

In a previous FMS (#41), about Jonathan and the honey incident, we saw Jonathan demonstrate great *boldness* in his military endeavors. Now he once again summons this virtue of *courage* as he confronts his father about the wickedness he is planning to do. Jonathan is tip-toeing on the tightrope here because he never knows when Saul might explode and where his unpredictability might lead.

Jonathan remembers the honey incident—how his own father's rashness almost caused his (Jonathan's) own death, and had it not been for the action of the people, Jonathan surely would have died. So it took great courage for Jonathan to stand up to his father's wicked plans. A lesser man would have failed to *confront* his father due to fear for his own position and well-being. *The courage to confront...* How about us? We, too, have experienced and will experience many occasions when we must choose to confront people with unpleasant realities. Do we have the virtue of courage in our personal character package?

Martin Luther did. Having nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg, Luther walked into the council hall of the emperor, Charles V, to face the charge of heresy. Just as he was about to enter, an old knight touched him on the shoulder and said, “Little monk, you are taking a step the like of which neither I nor many a commander in our fiercest battles would take.”

That was courage! We may not have to face an emperor or even some low-ranking official, but we do have these opportunities in one form or another. We may have the task of confronting an employer who shorts our paycheck, or an employee who has embezzled. We may have to confront a friend who has harmed or is continuing to harm ourselves or others. We will perhaps find ourselves needing to confront another church member or family members. Like Jonathan, we may have to confront a parent, or as a parent, we may need to confront an adult child. (I say an “adult child” because it is understood that confronting children while still at home is part of general parental responsibilities).

It is a given in *all* these situations that the one to be confronted has done or is about to do evil. In other words, we are not talking about situations where it is a matter of *opinion*. Nor are we speaking here of cases where even though someone may be in the wrong, that it is not our place to do the confronting. Those situations certainly exist also. It is critical that we recognize that in many cases, it is not our responsibility; it is, in fact, none of our business.

But sometimes we know that it is the right thing to do; that such and such a person must be confronted. Do we then have the courage to do the right thing? Surely one of the most common places that this type of situation will arise is in marriage. Generally speaking, it will require a greater measure of courage on the part of the wife to confront the husband, than vice versa.

Now to some particulars when actually confronting someone. There is a right way and a wrong way. The Bible sums up the general principle in the phrase “... speaking the truth in love...” in Ephesians 4:15. The particulars of that would include that we always employ other good character qualities while confronting someone. Those would include: deference instead of rudeness; sensitivity in lieu of callousness; compassion as opposed to indifference.

Add to that, gentleness and humility in our approach instead of harshness and pride; meekness in our presentation, rather than anger. If we fail to include these types of virtues, we will then surely fail to witness repentance in the heart of the one we are confronting. It will only harden his heart further.

As we re-read verses 4 & 5 (page 1), we cannot be absolutely certain of the tone of voice, but it is highly likely that Jonathan was exhibiting these fruits as he confronted his father. Can you imagine what his father’s reaction would have been if Jonathan had been proud, rude, and callous, etc.? What if he had confronted his father like this (and I will deliberately hyperbolize the point).

“Pops, come over here and set yourself down here in front of me. I’ve got a thang or two to tell you. Now just who in the hell do you think you are, trying to bump off my best friend, Davey. Why, I’ve got half a notion to hang you by yer ears. Don’t you ever learn anything, you numbskull? You’re about as dumb as a bag of rocks! Davey hasn’t done anything to you and yet you wanna kill him. Why can’t you be more like me and just get along with people. Shucks, everybody likes me ‘cause I’m a cool dude. But you, big daddy, you’re a pathetic pile of dung and I don’t have any sympathy for you. But I’ll tell you one thing: you’d better lay off my friend, Davey, or you and I are gonna tangle some more—pay attention! You hear me now, pops?”

Now that is just as much a confrontation as the one related in verses 4 & 5, but in my scenario Jonathan is proud, callous, rude, disrespectful, and generally insensitive to the fragile mental-emotional and spiritual condition of his sinning father. He shows no compassion for his father’s true well-being. And of course, Jonathan’s success in persuading his father to change his mind will be nil.

As aspiring overcomers, how do we stack up? How do *we* approach a confrontation? Do we come with an attitude of pride—proud that we are right? Are we disrespectful of the other person? Rude in our manner of speech? Anger or contempt and disgust in our tone of voice? Those are all precursors to failure. Therefore, if we wish Father to bless our efforts with success, that is, with repentance on the part of those we must confront; then, along with the courage to confront, we must learn to practice these many other ingredients of good character as well.

Jonathan's proper and respectful approach did win Saul's heart to the right—at least for the moment, as he vowed to forsake his plan to slay David. Yet, later we will see that he soon reneges. Incidentally therefore, Saul breaks the third commandment here because he swore by the name of Yahweh (verse 6). In other words, when he goes back on his vow, it means that he took the name of the LORD, (i.e., the name of YHWH) in vain.

In view of Jonathan's exemplary character, one would think that certainly Jonathan is also an overcomer, isn't he? And yet we know that Jonathan ultimately dies with Saul on Mount Gilboa. These are just things to be thinking about as we continue these studies: Saul represents the non-overcomer believers and the non-overcomer church and its rulers and leaders, in particular. David, a type of Christ, therefore represents the overcomer Christians, who will be rulers in righteousness, the Melchizedek priesthood. But what about Jonathan? What does he represent? Overcomers? ...yet he ultimately stood with and died with Saul, battling the Philistines. What do you think? We would like to hear your thoughts on this.

After Jonathan had confronted his father, we can assume that there was at least a short period of time, when Saul was of a calm temper. But then the Philistines began causing trouble again and this led to more danger for David on two fronts; first, with the Philistines, and then with Saul. First, David slew the Philistines "with great slaughter." So there goes David again, killing his "ten thousands." So how would this sight of the war hero, the conquering colonel, returning to the adulation of the women; how would this affect the moody mind of Saul? Sadly, it triggered another envious fit of murderous rage.

1 Samuel 18:9 And the evil spirit from YHWH was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand.

Saul is in a frenzy. David picks up his harp trying to soothe him with music as in times past. But Saul is "off his rocker, out of his gourd;" he is beset with an evil spirit sent from Father. And once more, Saul chucks his spear at David (verse 10). This is now perhaps the third time (there may have been more, unrecorded) that Saul goes berserk and tries to pin David to the wall while David is playing music for him. But the effect of the music now seems to be just

the opposite. Saul has reached a point where he obviously can no longer stand the *beautiful* music. His mind was now so far gone that *lovely* music had the effect upon him like gasoline has on an open cut. Consequently, Saul attacks the musician who had once been so close to him.

This evil spirit may have been in conjunction with, or may have even *caused* a physical change in Saul's brain, perhaps resulting in what is called *dementia*. The dictionary defines *dementia* as a condition of deteriorating mentality; madness or insanity. It also speaks of *dementia praecox* which literally means premature dementia; i.e., schizophrenia. It seems likely that Saul is suffering from this disease of *dementia* and/or *dementia praecox*. In view of all this, consider this very brief news item which I found in—of all places—the March 2001 issue of *Popular Mechanics*. It is titled: "Musical Signs of Dementia."

If you find yourself developing a taste for rap music after having spent a lifetime listening to the classics, you may be sick. Turning up music you once turned off is an early warning sign of frontotemporal dementia, Giovanni B. Frisoni, of Italy's national Alzheimer's disease research center, told a recent meeting of the American Academy of Neurology in St. Paul, Minnesota. Frisoni said that asking patients over age 60 about changes in their perception of pitch, timbre and rhythm could help to spot frontal and temporal lobe brain damage.

Perhaps if David would have stopped playing the beautiful harp music and instead imported some American rap "artists," maybe Saul would have started boogeying across the palace floor instead of chucking spears at David. But then, again, who knows? From the rap "music" (whether by whites or blacks) which I have had the misfortune to be exposed to—well, you read the news article above—so you decide.

Feed My Sheep is a part of the teaching ministry of James W. Bruggeman and is sent out freely upon request. The tithes and gifts of those who are fed by it make it possible for us to continue in ministry. Gifts may be sent to P.O. Box 6388, Asheville, NC 28816.