



FEED MY SHEEP

PUBLISHED BY JAMES W. BRUGGEMAN
STONE KINGDOM MINISTRIES
P. O. BOX 6388
ASHEVILLE, NC 28816 U.S.A.

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Carrot, Egg or Coffee Bean?

This is a continuation of our Bible studies which collectively could be called *Lessons in Overcomership*. Our last issue of FMS dealt with how overcomers must become forgivers. I made an error when I mentioned my two-tape message on the subject. The *correct* cassette numbers are #257 & 258. The title, once again, is *Could You Forgive God? My Personal Testimony on Forgiveness*. (It is available for the asking). Thanks to Hazel of Ft. Lauderdale for letting me know of this goof.

In addition to the topic of forgiveness, we also saw last month how we, as Christians who aspire to be overcomers, must *confront* our "Sauls" upon occasion. Wisdom is necessary to discern when those occasions exist. On other occasions, however, the wisest course of action may be to flee or separate from a particular "Saul" in our life. For newcomers, the one line summary is: King Saul represents *believers* (i. e., Christians) who are non-overcomers; David represents the overcomers.

We last left David attempting once more to soothe with lovely harp music the murderous rage of King Saul—but to no avail. Once again avoiding the javelin of Saul, David left the palace and went to his home. He assumed he was safe there because that is what he had done previously when Saul had tried to use him as a human pin cushion. But since Saul's dementia was steadily progressing, this time he decides to send his bully-boys after David.

1 Samuel 19:11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning:

They not only watched David's house that night, but according to Psalm 59 (which David composed concerning this event), they verbally harassed him much of the night.

Psalm 59:1 <To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.> Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O YHWH.

6 They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

We noted in a previous study that the sycophants of a Saul-type, the hangers-on, will do the bidding of a Saul, and they *enjoy* their work. This is apparent from David's description of them here in this psalm. You can just picture them pacing about David's house, hollering, ranting and raving, and taunting David. David prays an imprecatory prayer...

Psalm 59:12 For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak.

13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

14 And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about

the city.

15 Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge [grumble] if they be not satisfied.

It looked pretty bleak for David at that point, and he certainly does not take pride in his own ability to deliver himself. He realizes the impotence of his arm of flesh. Instead, he relies on the power and mercy of El Elyon, the almighty God.

Psalm 59:16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

There is an old saying that we should have faith and trust in God because it is all up to Him, but nevertheless, we should work like it is all up to us. It is the principle of putting feet to our faith. In this particular temptation (trial), God provided a means of escape for David. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13.)

1 Samuel 19:11 (cont'd) ...and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

Some Christians are such wimps and do-nothings, that if they were in David's shoes, they would have sat in the house responding to Michal with words like this: "Well, Michal, don't bother about that going-out-the-window idea. I trust in God. I have faith in Him. I believe that God is going to save me. So I'll just sit right here and watch His mighty power as He slays all my enemies." However, God did *not* slay any of those dogs at this time. The following illustration is appropriate here.

There was a terrible flood in a certain town. Everyone evacuated except one man. He refused to evacuate even as the waters continued rising to very high levels. So by the time the waters got as high as his ceiling, he had climbed on the roof. Soon the highway patrol came along in a rowboat and called for him to climb in, but he just shouted "No thanks, I'm a Christian. I have faith that God is going to save me."

A few hours later, he was perched on his chimney as the waters had risen to the peak of his roof.

Then a National Guard helicopter came by and lowered a rope and a sling and hollered at him to grab hold and they would hoist him to safety. But as before, he just repeated that he believed that God was going to save him. Unfortunately, he drowned. When he awoke in the resurrection and as he stood before the throne of God, both angry and embarrassed, he said: "God Almighty, I just have one question for you: I had *faith* and I believed that You were going to save me. Why didn't You?!!" And God just looked at him and shook His head, and said: "Well, son, I sent you a rowboat and a helicopter; what more did you need?"

Although there are many miracles recorded in the Bible, the fact is that God seldom resorts to the miraculous. Miracles are the exception. God almost always uses ordinary people to accomplish His plan. Furthermore, our Father has not called us to be do-nothings. Apathy and laziness have no place in the life of a true Christian. Yet, those two vices must be distinguished from times or circumstances which may arise in one's life in which the proper response may actually be to simply "sit tight and observe" for a while. Example:

Exodus 14:13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of YHWH, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

However, in the case in point, since David is in imminent danger and is apparently oblivious to it, God puts the sense of urgency in the heart and mind of David's wife. Notice that. It was David's wife who proposes the idea of David fleeing. The lesson to be learned by this little nugget is that God does not always speak to us directly but may send the message through another. It may be one's spouse, but it could be another family member, a friend, a child, or even a complete stranger—if we are attuned to hearing it.

Upon hearing his wife's advice, David concurs and escapes. In so doing, he is displaying more marks of excellent character. For one, he is obviously exercising *caution* as opposed to the vice of *rashness*. He is also displaying *humility* and *discernment*. How so? ...In listening carefully and thoughtfully to his wife and recognizing the wisdom of her advice. The plain truth is that for many men, it is humbling to heed their wife's counsel. In heeding her advice, David is then manifesting the character quality of *decisiveness*. He

doesn't delay in his action when hesitation might be a fatal mistake.

After David escaped, he linked up with his mentor, Samuel, who by this time had founded the first known Bible college/seminary. Three times King Saul sent detachments of men to the college to capture and bring David back to him. But on each occasion, it seems the troops caught "pentecost fever" and joined Samuel's seminarians in prophesying. (1 Samuel 19:19-21.)

Whatever was going on at the school, it was contagious—by God's providence, of course. It was the Divine means of protecting David. Whether these three detachments of men were permanently converted to peaceable men or if they simply returned and reported to Saul after their experience at Naioth, it is not clear. Finally, in exasperation, Saul himself came to Samuel's college of the prophets, intending to capture and ultimately slay David.

1 Samuel 19:22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu [the watchtower]: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah.

23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

Evidently, Saul was overcome by the Spirit even before he came upon the seminarians prophesying. So here was the king who had been possessed by an evil spirit sent by God, but now, to protect David, God replaces the evil spirit with the Holy Spirit—temporarily.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

So the evidence indicates that King Saul himself was then caught up in this rapturous state. The result was that his normal thought processes were held in abeyance day and night, thus allowing David time to escape once again. When King Saul came out of the prophetic trance, perhaps Samuel and he had a man-to-man chat and for a short time, at least, Saul was freed of his obsession to capture and kill David. But

where was David to flee to now? While Saul was still caught up at Naioth Bible College, David decided to go back to the palace and talk to his closest friend and confidant, Prince Jonathan.

1 Samuel 20:1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

You can feel the frustration in David's heart and mind. All he ever wanted to do was to be a good servant and friend of the king. Has this type of thing ever occurred in your life? ...with a friend? ...with a family member? ...Where no matter how hard you try to get along, it seems there is absolutely nothing you can do further to have an amiable relationship. That is because you are dealing with a Saul personality.

Not that any of us are perfect, but in that particular relationship, you may have very little blame at all. Thus, here, we find an example of an overcomer who, even after he has fled the presence of his Saul, still seeks reconciliation—this time through an intermediary. We can relate to the anguish of David, as we, too, feel like pleading with someone who has the ear of our Saul: what have I done to so anger him or her? How have I offended him so badly that he seeks to destroy me (physically or in my reputation)? In those cases, the problem lies with our Saul. He is perhaps jealous or envious of you for some reason. You cannot help that; you are just being yourself.

If God gave you the talent to...whatever—fill in the blank—the talent to make more money than your Saul, the talent to be better liked than Saul, the talent to be a better cook, a better parent, a better student, a better teacher, a more blest individual than your Saul, is that your fault? No!

Are you supposed to hold back from developing your full talents just so some Saul-type won't get jealous? No! The problem is in Saul. But...*it is also for purposes of training our character that God brings these Sauls into our lives.* Sometimes we must confront our Sauls, but there are other times when the time for confrontation is past. If the relationship becomes such that it is dangerous to one's life, then there is no choice but to flee and be separate. We would add that the threat to life need not be limited to threats of immediate physical violence, but could conceivably also include such circumstances, the cumula-

tive effect of which is to bring about life-threatening illnesses. That's an individual judgment call. But yet we notice that David is still making every possible effort to live at peace with Saul, and only as the very last resort does he depart the court of Saul.

We have seen David react in the midst of great personal tribulation and adversity. How does our character match up with David's? Do we show forth the character traits of an overcomer? Allow me to close with another illustration and a lesson for each of us as we deal with our own personal Sauls and other adversities.

A daughter complained to her father about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that just as one problem was solved, a new one arose.

Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In one he placed carrots, in the second he placed eggs, and in the last he placed ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil without saying a word.

His daughter sucked her teeth and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing. In about twenty minutes, he turned off the burners. He fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. Then he ladled out the coffee and placed it in a bowl. Turning to her, he asked: "Darling, what do you see?"

"Carrots, eggs and coffee," she replied.

He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. She smiled as she tasted its rich aroma. She humbly asked, "What does it mean, father?"

He explained that each of them had faced the same adversity, boiling water, but each had reacted differently. The carrot went in strong, hard and unrelenting. But after being subjected to the boiling water, it softened and became weak.

The egg had been fragile. Its thin outer shell had protected its liquid interior. But after sitting through the boiling water, its inside became hardened. The ground coffee beans were unique, however. After they were in the boiling water, *they had changed the water.*

"Which are you?" he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a carrot, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

And which one are you, my dear readers? Are you the carrot that seems hard, but with pain and adversity, do you wilt and become soft and lose your spiritual strength?

Or are you the egg, which starts off with a malleable heart? Were you a fluid, flowing, gentle spirit; but after a death, a separation, a divorce, or a layoff, have you become hardened and stiff? Your shell still looks the same, but underneath are you callous and harsh, with a bitter spirit and a hard heart?

Or are you like the coffee bean? The bean changes the hot water. It changes the thing that is bringing the pain. When the water gets hotter, the bean just makes it taste better. If you are like the bean, when things are at their worst, you—by the grace of God—get better and make things better around you.

When people speak nastily about you, do your praises and thanks to the Lord *increase*? When the hour is the darkest and trials are their greatest, does your worship elevate to a higher level? How do you handle adversity? How do you handle your Sauls? Are you a carrot, an egg or a coffee bean? Can you agree with the apostle Paul in the following?

2 Corinthians 4: 8 *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;*

9 *Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

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