



FEED MY SHEEP

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Was David a Liar?

Recent issues of FMS have focused on the lives of Saul and David. Knowing that David is a type of the overcomers and that King Saul is a type of the non-overcomers (nonetheless, Saul-types *are* believers), we are examining the various facets of their respective characters, seeking to learn what it takes to be an overcomer...and how not to be.

Previously, we found that David had to flee Saul on several occasions because Saul's attempts to kill David had become more frequent and more determined. Recently in our story, David's loving wife, Michal—King Saul's daughter—had counseled David to run for his life. To give her husband more time to get away, Michal had then dressed up a dummy, an effigy, in David's bed and she had lied to Saul's thugs who came to kill David. She told them he was sick when in fact he had already slipped out the window and left town. From this point on, David is on the run. He is a fugitive. He is a hunted man, a wanted man. He is number one on Saul's Ten Most Wanted list. The upcoming situations and incidents will give us deeper insights into David's character, both good and bad.

We know that David is described by God as a man after God's own heart, and we know that David represents the overcomers. All Christians want to be overcomers. No believer wants to emulate the wicked character traits of Saul. We all want to be part of the Davidic Company. Yet, some (and perhaps many) of us tend to get this idea that if we are not perfect, that we have disqualified ourselves from being overcomers.

But let's strike a balance here. We do not wish to create the impression that if you and I are not

measuring up in *all* the positive character traits, that we have just been cut from the team of overcomer candidates. That simply is not true. No one reaches perfection in this life. If they did, they would possess immortality. Being an overcomer is a lifelong race. Paul used that analogy several times (1 Cor. 9:24; 2 Tim. 3:7; Heb. 12:1). But it is not a 100-yard-dash. It is a marathon. One of the key ingredients in winning a marathon is endurance. In Calvinist theology, it is called the perseverance of the saints. It is the idea of not giving up.

When do we *most* want to give up? It is when we have slipped, fallen into sin and are weary of doing battle with the flesh. But that is exactly when we need to get back up and keep going. If it were easy, then *everybody* would be an overcomer! By definition, being an overcomer means that there are some enormous obstacles which we must conquer.

Of course, it goes without saying to those readers who have been under our teaching for some time; but for the sake of new ones, we want you to understand—whether we say it or not on every occasion that when we speak of *us* doing this or that, of *us* winning, of *us* conquering, of *us* overcoming—understand that it is **always** *not* of ourselves, but it is of *God* and His grace through His Spirit which is acting *in* us and *through* us to accomplish the victory. We boast only in what God does. Of ourselves, we can do nothing.

So let us not get discouraged that we fail; that we fall short of perfection; that we still sin. That does not disqualify us from overcomership. Let us strive

not to sin. But when we do fall, let us make haste to confess the sin and plead the blood of Jesus and know that God's mercy endures forever, that He forgives us. Then get back up and keep running the race.

We all desire to emulate David and be an overcomer like him. However, we are going to see presently that David was not always perfect either. He is now being confronted with even greater and more difficult tests and, as we will see, he did not always display perfect character. But the point is, he did not give up. When he failed, he threw himself on the mercy of God for both forgiveness and for protection.

David had fled his home and had gone to his mentor, the prophet Samuel, at the seminary which Samuel had evidently founded. But it wasn't long before Saul discovered his whereabouts and came after him (1 Samuel 19). While Saul was detained by a pentecostal spirit (hence, it is further evidence that Saul represents the church in the pentecost era), David fled back to the palace and consulted with his dear confidant, Prince Jonathan. They agreed to make one more attempt to ascertain whether Saul could live at peace with David. This proved to be impossible, so David and Jonathan parted, never to see each other again. David fled to the town of Nob, where the wilderness tabernacle now stood and consequently, where many of the priests lived, including Ahimelech, the current high priest.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

We can infer that since David was not only a high-ranking military commander but also the son-in-law of the king that it was customary for David to be accompanied by a royal retinue wherever he went. Therefore, when Ahimelech sees him alone and probably looking somewhat bedraggled and exhausted from hiding out from Saul's police for several days, the priest's instinct tells him something is not right. He is suspicious. And so what does David do? He concocts a story that he is on a secret mission for the king.

2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have

commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

If we assume that David's indirect quote of Saul ends with the words "commanded thee," then when he says "I have appointed..." it is referring to David and it means that he actually did have several servants with him, but he had told them to stay out of sight while he went on and met with the high priest. Ahimelech obviously knew nothing of the problems inside the royal family and so he fell for David's lie. It turned out to be disastrous for Ahimelech, his family and the entire town.

Previously, David had persuaded Jonathan to lie to Saul when David did not show up at the king's feast at the new moon. (1 Samuel 20:5, 6). He told Jonathan to tell his father that he, David, had to go to Bethlehem to be with his family. Of course, David did no such thing. Here we see David is at it again. No doubt, in his mind, he was totally justified to invent a fictitious story of being on a secret agent-type mission, but this lie would result in a great tragedy, as we will see in a future FMS.

David authored many of the psalms, including Psalm 119. It is the longest psalm, comprising 176 verses, and Psalm 119 is the very midpoint chapter in the whole Bible. This psalm is written in the form of an acrostic ...in Hebrew, of course. If it were in English, that would mean that the first verse begins with the letter *a*, the second verse with *b*, the third with *c*, and so forth. Except that in this particular composition, David started the first *eight* verses with *aleph*, the second set of eight verses with *bet*, the third set of eight verses with *gimel*, and so on throughout the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (22 letters times 8 verses each = 176 verses.)

David wrote Psalm 119 to extoll God's law. Almost every verse contains some reference to God's law, either using the word *law*, or using the word *statutes*, *judgments*, *commandments*, *ordinance*, *precepts* or *testimonies*. Notice verse 29 and David's plea to God. He says:

Psalm 119:29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

Why would David request that? The Hebrew word for "way" is *derek* and the lexicographers give as one of its meanings: "...habit, way 1e) of course of

life (fig.) 1f) of moral character .”

Is it possible that David had a *habit* of lying? ... and that here he was pleading for Father to *change* him (cause him to repent) by granting him grace for obedience to God’s law. Let’s go back to verse 25 and get the context. David is speaking:

Psalm 119:25 DALETH. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

26 I have declared my ways, ...

This sounds like David has acknowledged his sins, his habits, (habitual sin?) and he knows that Father hears our heartfelt confessions...

26b: ...and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness:

Again, this sounds like a man burdened by sin, who seeks strength from God.

28b ...strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

And so now David gets specific...

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me*.

This reminds us very much of Paul’s lament in Romans, chapter 7, where Paul says—

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

15 For that which I do I allow [Grk. know] not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

Another translation (actually, more a paraphrase than a translation) helps clarify that passage for us:

NJB Romans 7:14 We are well aware that the Law is spiritual: but I am a creature of flesh and

blood sold as a slave to sin.

15 I do not understand my own behaviour; I do not act as I mean to, but I do things that I hate.

16 While I am acting as I do not want to, I still acknowledge the Law as good,

You see, David is saying that he has chosen the way of truth, but yet he still finds himself lying! “I do not understand my own behavior; I do not act as I mean to, but I do things that I hate; so, Father, by your grace, grant me obedience to your law, because I acknowledge that the Law is good.” David goes on in Psalm 119, verse 32...

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O YHWH, put me not to shame.

Just as with the apostle Paul, these verses indicate that it’s an up and down process in David’s life. Otherwise, why would he say “I have stuck unto thy testimonies,” and then plead with Father, “please don’t put me to shame?” As if he is saying: “I’m trying, Father, but I sometimes fall, so please don’t put me to shame.” This eight-verse portion of the acrostic then concludes with the following realization on the part of David. He says:

32 I will run the way of [i.e., I will be an habitually perfect follower of] thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

It appears that this is a progressive change. In other words, David is saying: “I will keep Your commandments to a greater and greater degree according to how much You enlarge my heart, until the era when I will *always* be in perfection.” God’s sovereignty at work! We believe that the enlarging of the heart has to do with both *opening* our understanding of the ways and means of Father, as well as *increasing* our desire and capacity to be obedient. David now finishes telling his cover story to Ahimelech, and then demands of him...

1 Samuel 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

The phrase “under thine hand” simply means under Ahimelech’s power or under his control. In order to understand the controversy being described in the next few verses, we need to examine some prescriptions of the ceremonial law found in Leviticus

24. When the children of Israel came out of the wilderness and traversed Jordan, the tabernacle was first erected in Shiloh. It remained there until the death of Eli. Some time after that, Samuel must have had it moved and erected at the town of Nob.¹ David is asking Ahimelech to give him the loaves of the showbread from the tabernacle. The law specified the following concerning the showbread:

Leviticus 24:5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.

6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before YHWH.

7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, *even* an offering made by fire unto YHWH.

8 Every sabbath he shall set it in order before YHWH continually, *being taken* from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

9 And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of YHWH made by fire by a perpetual statute.

So the facts are that every sabbath day, the holy bread, the showbread, was to be replaced with some fresh bread, and the old bread *belonged to the priests* for them to eat. The table of showbread was located, not in the outer court of the tabernacle, but it was in the holy place, along with the golden lampstand and the golden altar of incense. But David is demanding that Ahimelech give him five loaves of holy bread, or whatever is available.

4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

What does that mean? What does that have to do with the bread? It is clarified in another section of the law, Leviticus 15. We can surmise that this little scenario is occurring on the sabbath because Ahimelech tells David that the only bread available is the bread which has just been removed from the table of showbread. Ahimelech appears willing to break the rule concerning it being only for the priests, but there is a further condition that must be met before David and his men can have the bread. It is this idea of keeping themselves from women. Ahimelech is

referring to a law of cleanliness and holiness:

Leviticus 15:16 And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall wash all his flesh in water, and be unclean until the even.

Ahimelech was asking David if all his men were clean. Not *ceremonially* clean, mind you; but physically clean! If they were unclean, they could not have any of the holy bread because they would be unclean until the evening.

NKJ 1 Samuel 21:5 Then David answered the priest, and said to him, "Truly, women *have been* kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day."

In other words, David is arguing that even though the bread had been on the showbread table—the sanctified vessel—earlier in the day, it was no longer there, and thus it was not holy anymore. Therefore, especially in view of the situation of him and his men being hungry, it was permissible for the priest to give them the bread, David contended.

1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before YHWH, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

Ponder this until next month: Is David doing wrong in demanding the bread? Did the priest do wrong by giving this bread to David and his men?

ENDNOTE

1. Several years ago, we did a very detailed study of the tabernacle in the wilderness, 30 audio-taped lectures with numerous visual aids and one videotape (V-101) comprising a quick survey of the series utilizing about 40 overhead transparencies. See our catalog (free upon request) for descriptions of the individual tapes and the albums they comprise. The order form lists only the titles, not descriptions.

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