



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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Hearing God's Voice

In these teaching monographs of recent months, we have been exploring the lives of Saul and David, paying close attention to their character traits. This, in order to better enable us to attain the high calling of being an overcomer. Most recently, King Saul charged Ahimelech, the high priest, with treason. Saul then found a bloodthirsty manslayer in his chief herdsman, the Edomite Doeg, who slew 85 priests of Nob, their families and all in the city. Upon hearing the news, David is filled with grief and admits that it was his actions which brought about the massacre. The only one who escaped was Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, who then became a companion with David and his men.

Very importantly, recall that Abiathar now succeeds his father as high priest in Israel. Symbolically, this means that the high priest is with the overcomers. These overcomers, as has always been the case for the past two millennia, are a minority among believers. Just like David, they are often subjected to tremendous persecutions and find themselves out of the mainstream in many ways. David and his men flee to the south.

1 Samuel 23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

Keilah was a town in the lowland plains area of the tribal territory of Judah northwest of Hebron. Being in the plains, it was therefore ideally suited for growing grains. But this town was also closer to the Philistine border on the west and was therefore a tempting target for the Philistines. The threshingfloor was the place where the wheat was threshed. Remember that wheat is another symbol of believers who are not overcomers.

Saul, wheat and non-overcomer-believers go together. Barley is the grain which symbolizes overcomers and we have noted in some of our audiotaped lectures how barley is not threshed. It is winnowed; meaning that it is merely tossed up in the air and the wind then blows the chaff away.

But the wind is not sufficient to separate the wheat from its chaff and that is why wheat is found in a threshing floor. Wheat requires somewhat harsher treatment before the chaff comes off. The chaff must first be loosened by being trod upon by the hooves of oxen. Then the wheat can be winnowed as well. These are spiritual pictures. It tells us that those of the wheat company need more discipline and training before they learn to do righteousness by nature.

In the story here, we find the Philistines raiding the threshingfloors of the Judahite-Israelites. Again, there are multiple levels of understanding in this story. When we view the Philistines as symbolizing the carnal nature, the flesh, it tells us that some wheat company Israelites are being carried off by their carnal natures.

On another level, we learned that the word Philistine actually means "immigrants." From this perspective, Philistines would symbolize non-Israelite aliens who invade the land of Israel to steal and plunder. Robbing the threshingfloors is stealing the fruits of a man's labor. In that day, Israel had a simple, agrarian economy. Today in our modern, nominally Christian society, it is a more sophisticated means of robbing by the Philistines. The plundering of the fruits of our labor is done in a somewhat *concealed* manner.

One example would be that our paychecks have taxes withheld, and some of these taxes then go to support illegal aliens who come into this country and then obtain government handouts of all kinds. It is what the great French statesman, Frederic Bastiat, called “legalized plunder” in a little book called *The Law* which he wrote in 1848. His treatise is a marvelously clear and logical exposé of the numerous fallacies of a socialist-Marxist society and big government. It ought to be required reading and the basis of a course in government in our high schools. (Available from us: \$3, plus \$2 s + h; or see SKM Order Form.)

In the story, David is hiding in the area of Keilah. He wonders if he ought to do something about these aliens plundering his fellow Israelites. But David realizes that he is no longer an army officer for Saul and thus he has no official commission from his government to take any action. Being in this state of uncertainty, he asks God what to do.

2 Therefore David enquired of YHWH, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And YHWH said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

Here is what I call an “interlingual pun,” of which God has many hidden in his Word. The town is called Keilah (pronounced “Key-Law”). What is the *key law* of God? Jesus gave the answer when the Pharisees asked him what is the greatest commandment. He told them that the key law was two-fold: To love God and love your neighbor.

So the people in and around “Key Law” are losing their wheat to the Philistines. In the typology, it is as if God says: “Okay, we’ve lost enough wheat people to carnality. I want David and my barley men—symbolizing Christ and my overcomers—to strike a blow against the flesh and in so doing they will be demonstrating the Key Law to the wheat people of Keilah. By smiting the fleshly Philistines, they will be demonstrating their love for their neighbors, and by that, they will be demonstrating their love for Me.”

So David has received a word from YHWH and he is ready and probably enthusiastic to carry out the mission. However, David’s men are not so eager.

3 And David’s men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

In other words, David’s men are saying: “David, what are you doing, man? It’s downright scary being out here in the plains of Judah with King Saul and his armies looking to kill us, and now you’re suggesting that we should go and take on the Philistines to boot? Give us a break!”

4 Then David enquired of YHWH yet again. And YHWH answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

It appears that David had no doubt whatsoever that he had heard from God; but for the sake of reassuring and instilling courage in his men, he inquired of God again. What can we learn from this? It tells us that it is both permissible and proper for us as prospective overcomers; indeed, for any Christian, to ask YHWH for reassurance concerning His direction. It would be especially appropriate when the word we *think* we are hearing seems so crazy and illogical. But isn’t that the way YHWH often does things? It is the principle which Paul stated this way in an epistle:

1 Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

David’s inquiring twice brings to mind the principle of the double witness. The first occurrence in the Bible of this principle is found to be applicable strictly in regard to a murder trial.

Numbers 35:30 Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause *him* to die.

Later in the law we find that the principle not only applies to murder cases, but its application is extended to include any manner of sin (crime).

Deuteronomy 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter [facts] be established.

This principle is then found in the New Testament where both Jesus and Paul invoke it. In the gospel of Matthew, we have the situation where one

Christian perceives that he has been offended or sinned against by another Christian. Jesus directs that the offended one go *privately* to the one who has offended him and seek reconciliation. But if that is not successful, then Jesus says to go to step two:

Matthew 18:16 But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Paul employs this same principle when he is instructing his protégé, Timothy, concerning what to do when someone comes running to him with a bad report about another minister.

1 Timothy 5:19 Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses.

Elders or ministers of the gospel are often the target of people who are angry at them for one reason or another. Paul therefore is stressing that especially in the case of somebody accusing an elder of a sin or crime, that one must have two or three witnesses. Does this mean that no one should ever report wrongdoing by ministers? Of course not. Personally, if I have only one witness concerning potential wrongdoing by a minister, I “put it on the shelf” and give it no credence until a second witness comes along. Obviously, there would never be two witnesses if the first witness never reported it in the first place. In Paul’s letter to the church at Corinth, a very curious case presents itself.

2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

Upon first reading, it appears that Paul is claiming that he himself is the first, second and will be a third witness to whatever he is writing about. But as we examine it, we will find Paul’s reference to the law of witnesses is directed at the Corinthian church in order to impel them to act, because *their members were the witnesses*. Paul is saying he will not sit idly by and let this situation continue when he arrives. What situation? To answer that, we need to go back to

Paul’s earlier letter to them, where he mentioned it first.

1 Corinthians 4:18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in* the spirit of meekness?

Can you tell that Paul is upset? But what is he so upset about? That people are puffed up? Yes, but puffed up about what? Let’s read on...

1 Corinthians 5:1 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

In other words, news was all over Corinth that there was a member of the congregation who, after he had been accepted as a fellow believer, then “took up” (to put it euphemistically) with his stepmother.

Evidently, the being “puffed up” was the fact that the members of the congregation did nothing about it. Paul says they ought to be mourning about it at the very least, but instead they are puffed up. In other words, they are so tolerant of that sin going on blatantly and openly in their midst that they are essentially daring Paul to come and do something about it. Whether this fornicator was a prominent or wealthy member whom the other members were fearful of crossing, we do not know. That should be irrelevant. So Paul takes up the challenge and tells them that they already have the necessary two or three witnesses to this sin and they had better excommunicate the offender, or else when Paul comes, he will not go easy on them. So Paul was invoking the law of double witness—not that his two or three visits to them made him the only witness, but he was refreshing their memories to the law of witnesses to admonish them to purge out the leaven from their midst.

Now in all of this discussion of the law of double and triple witness, there are two different applica-

tions of this principle which we must distinguish between. First, there is the matter of *witnesses to a crime or a sin*, as in the church at Corinth. Secondly, there is the matter of having *two or more witnesses* to prove that we are *hearing God's voice*, where obviously there is no sin or crime involved.

In all of the instances mentioned above—in the case of murder, or any manner of any sin, or of an accusation against an elder, or when someone has personally sinned against you (Mat. 18), or in the case of the man in Corinth who was “shacking up” with his stepmother—all of these require two or more witnesses. Obviously, the same person cannot be both the first and second witness. Two witnesses in the case of a crime or sin must be two different people.

But in the matter of hearing God's voice, having two different persons is not necessarily required. In some cases it is perhaps not even possible. The Scriptures provide a number of examples of one person who has received a double witness from God, either when God is informing his prophet what is going to happen, or when God is directing a person to action. If God is directing you to do something, He is not usually—He may, but He is not usually—going to give you a second witness from your neighbor or some stranger.

For example, recall Pharaoh's dream which Joseph was called out of the dungeon to interpret. This dream was given only to Pharaoh but it contained within itself the double witness. In fact, when Pharaoh relates the dreams to Joseph, he tells about the seven fat cows being eaten by the seven thin cows. And then he says: “And I awoke.” Then he had the second dream which was the seven fat ears of grain being devoured by the seven withered ears of grain. And when Joseph interprets, he says:

Genesis 41:26 The seven good kine [cattle] are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

This was a case of two witnesses given to one person, in this case, to foretell events. Another example is Gideon. Like David, he was being directed to take a certain action. Remember how he put out a fleece to discern YHWH's will (Judges 6:39, 40)? And when it seemed illogical and “kooky” to Gideon that he was called to lead an army to defeat the Midianites and the other enemies; well, this was something

the cautious Gideon wanted to get further confirmation on. So he put out the fleece the second time. In other words, he got his own second witness from God. It was unquestionably a legitimate and accurate word of guidance and direction from God. Gideon did not go ask his brother if he thought God was calling him to go against the Midianites. It was one-on-one communication with God.

So when it comes to the very important matter of hearing from God, we ask the question: can the second witness come from the same person? Based on the foregoing examples, we conclude that it certainly can. Likewise, in the story we are presently studying, we find that David himself obtains both the first and second witness from God. So there is nothing inherently wrong with having two witnesses from the same person when seeking a word from the Lord.

Two important cautions, however: *Any true word from God will not contradict His written Word.* Secondly, when applying this idea in the realm of our modern church structure, especially as regarding church authority, this fact does not necessarily mean that Christians must *blindly* follow another man—a minister, for instance—and never question his directions or his supposed revelations from YHWH.

People blindly following religious leaders is exactly how “wacko” cults get started. Every person has the right to personally ask the Father for guidance and to have that direct relationship with Him and with Jesus as our *only* High Priest and intermediary. Contrary to what many churches teach, no priest, minister or other go-between is necessary. Incidentally, and in conclusion, when one studies church history, it is clear that many of the modern and powerful sects (denominations, movements, etc.) of Christianity began as wacko cults—and they still are! —For the simple reason that their members are taught never to question the dictates of the church leadership. Rather, these cults have become so enormous that they are now “respectable.” Precious saints, guard your personal relationship with Father through Jesus Christ alone.

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