



FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #55

June 2003

Living in the House of Saul

In our studies contrasting the characters of Saul and David, we left off last time with David seeking God's guidance on whether to attack the Philistines. These foreigners had been oppressing his Judahite kinsmen in the town of Keilah [pronounced "Key-Law," and concerning which, see last month's FMS].

1 Samuel 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

Imagine how pleased and grateful the people of Keilah must have been to have those alien robbers driven away in defeat. Pleased? Yes. Grateful? Not so fast there. We will see shortly.

6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down *with* an ephod in his hand.

7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

Remember, Saul-type individuals past and present are not infidels and atheists. They are believers. But they are *backsliding* believers. They are in rebellion against God. They want to be leaders of God's church or God's nation without themselves being subservient to God Himself. Instead, they want to *be* served. Consequently, when the Sauls of this world see a circumstance that *appears* favorable to them—like Saul seeing David apparently trapped in the town of Keilah—they believe that God is *blessing them* by delivering the

David-types into their hands. But they are misinterpreting the event.

Rather, this is the result of the evil spirit sent from God. Saul is deceived in his understanding of events. Thus, he prepares to act upon what he thinks is a blessing from God. But God has planned this deception for Saul and so Saul's actions then proceed according to God's preordained plan.

8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

9 And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief [margin: "planned evil"] against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

10 Then said David, O YHWH, God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

Here David had just saved this city from the Philistines and now the city is threatened again with destruction, this time by its own national government. Saul-types think they are doing God a service to persecute and exterminate overcomers. This applies to Saul's manifestations in both church and state. From the Saul-as-church-leaders perspective, the overcomers are *heretics*. From the Saul-as-government-leaders perspective, the overcomers are *traitors*. Consider the Dark Ages when the church of Rome embodied the Saul-type as both church and state. The Catholic church *was* the government. The history of that era is replete with examples very similar to David's predicament in Keilah.

One is the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in France. It began August 24, 1572. It sparked almost two months of rampage during which entire towns of French Huguenots (French Calvinists) were slaughtered. These were towns which had earlier been promised by the Catholic powers (the Saul-type) as towns of safe haven where the Huguenots could worship freely. But one day the Huguenots woke up to the sounds of slaughter. It seems the Catholic Saul-types had had a change of mind. ... a *change of mind*. Does that not sound like Saul—when the evil spirit came upon him? Some 50,000 Huguenots were murdered.

But did the hierarchy of church and state think they were doing wrong? No, they firmly believed they were doing God a service by exterminating these heretic Huguenots. They firmly believed they heard clearly from God. Of course, in England and elsewhere, when the tables were turned and the Protestants had the upper hand, they proved no better, for they then persecuted the Catholics.

Other examples from the Dark Ages would include the persecution of the Albigensians, the Cathars and Vaudois—all of them declared heretics by Rome for not submitting to her authority. Even so, we are not implying that these persecuted Christian groups had perfect doctrine. They certainly had their peculiarities. No doubt there were overcomers among them. But the fact that they were outcasts and were hunted down and persecuted provides a parallel to David and his men. At this point in the story David seeks God's guidance again.

11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O YHWH, God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And YHWH said, He will come down.

12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And YHWH said, They will deliver thee up.

Such gratitude! David and his men, the types of the overcomers, apply the Key Law to the people of Keilah. By driving out and killing many of the Philistines oppressors, the overcomers demonstrate love (the Key Law) for their neighbors. In return, their neighbors would see them killed. Such has been the plight of overcomers throughout history.

But does that mean that Christian overcomer

candidates should change their behavior? The flesh, the Philistine in us, screams out for justice in the form of revenge, doesn't it? In our carnality, we would snarl and say: "If our own people can't see how we are saving them and pulling their fat out of the fire, then to hell with them. They deserve what they get!" But is that the proper attitude for an aspiring overcomer? No, an overcomer will always return good for evil and love for hatred. *That* is being like David. *That* is being obedient to Jesus, the pattern overcomer, the greater David. Jesus told those who desired to follow Him...

Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

...Which is where the difficulty lies for all of us, for it is so much easier said than done. On a personal level, we all face little trials and tribulations daily—and sometimes major trials—and the last thing we feel like doing is returning good for evil and blessing those who hate us. Lord, give us daily grace to do so.

In verse 9 (page 1), David calls for the ephod. The word ephod here is a figure of speech where ephod is put for the breastplate including the Urim and Thummim. The high priest's ephod was a special sleeveless garment which came down to about mid-thigh length or just above the knees. (Cf. Exodus 28:28ff)

Upon the chest area of that tunic, right over the heart, was the breastplate itself which was fastened to the ephod by golden chains and ribbons of blue lace. The breastplate was perhaps 12 inches square and it had four rows of jewels with three jewels in each row. On each of the jewels was engraved the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. But this breastplate was more than that.

The cloth into which the jewels were set was merely the front side of a pocket or pouch. The breastplate was actually open on the top and stitched together on the other three sides. Inside the pouch were two unique stones, called the Urim and Thummim (Hebrew for "lights" and "perfections"). These were used by the high priest to obtain answers from God. Among other things, the Urim and Thummim are also called the sacred lots.

We would surmise that when King Saul had summoned Ahimelech, the high priest, and all the other priests at Nob to come to his court that they left Ahimelech's son, Abiathar, back in Nob to safeguard the ephod. When Saul had Doeg kill all the priests, Abiathar fled to David. In America, we use the term "president-elect." At the death of his father, Abiathar now becomes high priest in Israel and God foreordained that this horrendous slaughter at Nob would be the manner in which the high priest would become allied with the righteous "king-elect" David. Along with Abiathar came the ephod, a God-ordained method of obtaining divine guidance.

It was only fitting that the ephod become available to David because Saul had demonstrated that he was not interested in having God's direction. Again, this is typical of Sauls throughout history. Once in power, whether in church or state, they become proud. To seek divine guidance, one must humble oneself and so proud Sauls forsake it. Saul had rejected guidance from Samuel the *prophet*. Then, in his rage at David, he slaughtered the *priests* of Nob, which showed that he cared little for the sacred things including the ephod, the breastplate, Urim and Thummim. But later on, when King Saul was scared out of his wits, he tried to ask God's help, but look what happened...

1 Samuel 28:6 And when Saul enquired of YHWH, YHWH answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

The lesson is clear: in this case, God did not allow "deathbed repentance." Instead, David now had in his retinue the prophet Gad and the high priest with the ephod whereby he could directly ask God's guidance. Through the ephod (Urim and Thummim), the heavenly Father's providential guidance then caused David to leave the city of Keilah and thus be saved from Saul's evil intent once again.

1 Samuel 23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

Previously, David's company numbered 400. The surge in the number of his followers is not because David's *fame* is growing. David was already as famous in Israel as was King Saul himself—that is

one of the reasons Saul grew so jealous.

1 Samuel 13:15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were present with him*, about six hundred men.

Verses 13 and 14 of that chapter show that when Saul had his 600 men, it was at that time that Samuel pronounced God's judgment on him for disobedience. We see the contrast. When Saul has 600 men, he has already started to manifest his wicked character. When David has 600 men, he has continued to display obedience in virtually everything. So David's companions are increasing in number because they see the rotten fruit of Saul's character and they abandon him.

We can now add a few more virtuous traits to David's character resume. When his men demurred about going into battle against the Philistines (discussed last month), David did not get angry and display arrogance, and shout at them: "Hey, I'm in charge here. It's my way or the highway!" David showed *meekness* instead of anger. He showed *tolerance* in that he realized that his men might not have the same high level of faith that he had. So he graciously asked YHWH a second time if they should fight the Philistines. Instead of callousness and lack of concern, David showed *attentiveness* and *sensitivity* to their need for reassurance. Unlike Saul, David was more able to keep his ego in check.

14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

If we desire to be overcomers, then first we must go through the wilderness experience. As with David, it is a place of testing and trials and suffering. If we would rule with Jesus then we must suffer with him. Obviously, all human beings suffer in one way or another. It is part of the human condition. But a key point to remember concerning the suffering of an overcomer prospect is that the suffering is *because* of your faith and walk as a Christian. After all, I am sure that the Rockefeller and Rothschild families suffer at times in their lives also, by the death of loved ones, if nothing else; but that does not make them overcomers in training, does it?

1 Samuel 23:15 And David saw that Saul was

come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

Jonathan was probably taking quite a risk here in going to see David. It is quite likely that Saul would have tried to kill Jonathan had he known about it. But Jonathan's visit was undoubtedly a great encouragement to David.

17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

18 And they two made a covenant before YHWH: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Recall that David and Jonathan had already made a covenant back in chapter 20 in which David agreed not to exterminate Jonathan's descendants when he came to the throne. That practice has been almost standard operating procedure right up into the 20th century... for rivals to a throne to wipe out the other guy's family to a man, thereby hoping to solidify the hold on the monarchy for many generations.

Jonathan also expresses his conviction that his father, try as he might, will not succeed in his attempts to kill David. Jonathan had already acknowledged previously when he gave David his royal robe and his weapons that he knew that God had chosen David to be king, so he is just reiterating it here.

The new component in this covenant is that Jonathan asks David to place him as his second-in-command. David agrees. In the typology, whom does Jonathan represent? Does he represent overcomers? That he does not is given weight by the fact that he stays with Saul the rest of his life and in fact dies with Saul fighting the Philistines. So is Jonathan an overcomer candidate who did not quite measure up? The evidence is against it.

Perhaps this "new covenant" between David and Jonathan offers a clue. David, of course, represents Jesus. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant, which was primarily to confirm the promises made to the fathers. But He also made a covenant with his apostles. He promised them they would sit on 12 thrones

judging the 12 tribes of Israel. In other words, one of the covenants of Jesus to his overcomers is that they will be second-in-command to Him. Notice the parallel: David and Jonathan; Jesus and his apostles.

But through the ages, almost all overcomers have had to die and must be resurrected before they can serve as second-in-command. The apostles (Jonathan) had to die. It is only that very tiny number who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord who will be awarded immortal bodies without having to die first. So is it possible that Jonathan represents the vast majority of overcomers who must die and be resurrected?

An added dimension to that is that Jonathan represents those overcomers who were not called to flee Saul and live in the wilderness, but who were called *to live in Saul's house*. This would then foreshadow, for example in the Dark Ages, certain Christians who, although they were born Catholic and trapped in that system, nonetheless lived exemplary lives as overcomers in their own trying circumstances.

You see, even though the Roman church is riddled with false doctrines, that does not mean that God did (and does) not have some of his overcomers, his Jonathans, "living in the house of Saul." Incidentally, Protestant churches today are also riddled with false doctrine and so the same applies there.

This can also apply to each of us on a personal level. Do you live "in the house of (or with a) Saul?" If so, do not give up hope, thinking that your Saul must perish without the benefit of deathbed repentance. Remember this principle: *what was death in the Old is life in the New Testament*. We do not have space to develop that concept here but as our primary example in this context, pray that your Saul follows the New Testament pattern of Saul who became the overcomer Paul.

These are just bare outlines of a couple possibilities as to whom Jonathan represents. Your feedback and insights are welcome.

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.