



FEED MY SHEEP

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Dung in the Church

The life of David is one long continuous lesson for Christians by which we can learn how to be overcomers. In our last issue, we saw how David was fleeing King Saul and learned by direct revelation from God that the townspeople of Keilah were about to hand him over to Saul. So David and his men journey to a new area near the town of Ziph. But he barely catches his breath when...

1 Samuel 23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?

20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

Here, just as in Keilah, is another case where the overcomers are betrayed by just plain, old ordinary folks, just trying to be "good citizens," helping the government catch the criminal. We have often heard it said how God's saints must pass through the *furnace of affliction*. This is true. The phrase comes from ...

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

If not a synonym, then a related word to *refining* is *smelting*. Smelting is what happens in a furnace. It is significant then, that the word Ziphites means "smelters." Do you see a coded meaning there? God dispatches his "smelters," His Ziphites, to antagonize the overcomers so that they will be refined in that furnace of afflictions.

Henceforth, when we recognize some one or some group or some situation as Ziphites, as smelters in our life, can we have a new attitude about them? Can we actually *thank* Father for sending these Ziphites to smelt and refine and purify us for His service? It's hard to thank God for negative blessings, no question about it,but that is part of being an overcomer.

Many of the great men in the Old Testament were overcomer types, but certainly one of the *greatest* case studies in overcomership would have to be Job. It is only fitting then that we find this statement by Job concerning his trials in the furnace of his life.

Job 23:10 But he [God] knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

What a promise! It was not only given for Job personally, but for all overcomers. Gold symbolizes the divine nature. The apostle John tells us that "When we see Him we shall be like Him." We shall possess His divine nature. But the path to the divine nature first takes us through the furnace. Peter also addresses this point.

1 Peter 1: 7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

David had his literal Ziphites and we have our metaphorical Ziphites, but often in the form of actual

persons as well, right? Who has never had a Ziphite in their life? How many times have you heard people say: "Oh, he/she just burns me up!" Now can we say: "Good! A fiery trial is just what Dr. Jesus ordered." Of course, we probably should not be *vocalizing* statements like that to begin with, because of the power of the tongue.

For example, if a person is always saying things like "he's a pain in the neck," it has been observed that after a while the person saying it seems to actually have constant neck pain. There might be something to that. Nonetheless, the point stands that we ought to thank Father for our "Ziphites." When Saul hears from the Ziphites of David's whereabouts he goes on the chase.

1 Samuel 23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

This situation must have looked pretty bleak to David, comparable to a personal Red Sea experience. He is surrounded and from all natural appearances, it seems like they are going to be captured imminently. Typical of Father, isn't it? He waits until the last microsecond, testing our faith to the last ounce. Even though David had been told by the prophet Samuel that he would be king, David might have had occasions like this where he began trembling and wondering if the prophet's message were really true. You can read about his mental torments in many of his psalms.

27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammah-le-koth.

Amazing! Did you notice that David and *the overcomers are saved by an enemy invasion of the land*. With no further comment necessary, we can tuck that thought in the back of our minds for future reference as to how that type and shadow might play out in our own nation. That Hebrew phrase, *Sela-hammah-le-koth*, means a "cliff of divisions or cliff of separations." Bullinger says it was a place "where two forces

could be inaccessible the one to the other and yet within sight and hearing." Hmmm. Isn't that descriptive of the church as a whole throughout the ages of Passover and Pentecost?

The church is composed of overcomers and non-overcomers: barley and wheat companies. They are able to see and hear each other. Christians of both groups have fellowship and mingle with each other all the time and yet, from the *spiritual* perspective, they are separated and divided into two totally different groups. There is a cliff of separation or division between them spiritually. When the Philistine threat was over, Saul again went after David.

1 Samuel 24:1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of Engedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.

There are a couple of ways to look at the symbolism here. First, we note that the Sauls never give up in their pursuit of the overcomers. The overcomers will have times of rest, but then God raises the bar for the high jump once more, and it is time for more trials and testing. As overcomer candidates, shall we grumble or rejoice? The apostle James counsels...

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations [various trials and testings];

3 Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We see two animals in the symbolism of Engedi: goats and sheep. In fact, the word Engedi means "fount of the kid." Most Christians think that goats are always bad and the sheep are the Christians. That perception comes from Jesus' parable of the sheep and goat nations, sheep on the right; goats on the left, etc. Moreover, many Christians believe this means that the goats (unsaved) go to hell. Hopefully, most of our readers have long ago jettisoned the false doctrine of

the eternal barbecue pit.

Let's go ahead and look at the story here with the idea that the goats are always bad. We find Saul with his perverted mindset thinking: "Well, David is hiding among the goats. That's a logical place for him to hide because he would blend right in. David is a goat, a wicked man. He is trying to kill me and steal my throne."

But where is David actually hiding? He is in the cave which is a *sheepcote*. A sheepcote is an enclosure which protects the flock from the elements or from danger. So David is in *goat* country, but he has made his hideout in a *sheepcote*. David was a shepherd boy and he is a type of Jesus, the good shepherd. So while David and his men are hidden back in the many recesses of this cavern, it says "Saul went in *to cover his feet*."

Everyone agrees this is a euphemism. There are a few who say this means he went in to take a nap, that it means "to go to sleep." But the evidence for that meaning is slim and if so, then it almost screams the question: why would the writer need a euphemism for saying "Saul went to sleep?" Why not just say: "Saul went in to sleep?"

Most scholars agree that it is a euphemism for one of the necessities of nature. Today, we have many euphemisms for that same necessity. One of them is "to go number two." Our dear friends, Steve Jones and Ron Oja, have taught us many things about dung in the Bible. The most basic point is that dung is a symbol of idols and idolatry. Understanding this euphemism is central to understanding the symbolism in this incident at Engedi.

When men of Saul's era had to go number two, they dropped their clothing, which was not trousers and briefs, but tunic-type clothing with outer mantles and robes. So when they took off the garments to "do their business" (another modern euphemism), one or more of the garments covered their feet, hence the euphemism.

Remember that Saul does not have a shepherd's heart like David. Saul was a cattleman, searching for his father's asses. The ass is one of the symbols of Pentecost. So what is *Saul* doing in the sheepcote, that is, in the home of the sheep? He's *crapping* in it! Incidentally, the word "crap" is derived from Thomas

Crapper who invented the flush toilet a couple centuries ago.

Symbolically, the Sauls deposit their idols in the midst of the sheep house. Although it makes some stretches in places, Alexander Hislop's nearly 100-year old book, *The Two Babylons*, demonstrates clearly how accurate this prophetic symbolism in the Bible was regarding the Roman church. But the Protestant churches are certainly not immune to idols either. They have their share of dung in the sheepcote as well. We could write pages detailing the dung in the church in its various forms, but that must wait for another time.

1 Samuel 24:4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which YHWH said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt [corner, border] of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, YHWH forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, YHWH'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of YHWH.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

Biblical archeologists have explored many of the caves in this area, and they report that some of them are quite large. They are caverns with many passageways which go for quite some distance into the bowels of the earth. It is not hard to imagine that David and his men could be hidden way back in the various compartments, out of earshot of Saul.

Saul just came in to do his business, so he did not go very far in from the mouth of the cave. And when you come into a cave from the brilliant daylight, you simply cannot see back in the dark passageways, where David undoubtedly had guards posted. When it was reported to him that Saul was there, that is when his men urged David to do him violence.

They knew that David was anointed to be king, so in their view, this was the time to act—to kill Saul and ascend to the throne. David did not agree. He knew that Saul had been anointed by God. David felt

it was not his place to remove Saul from a position God had appointed him to. If God wanted Saul removed, God would bring it about in some other way than by David's hand. When Saul was doing his business, he must have laid his robe off to the side. With the din and noise of his army just outside the mouth of the cave, it would not have been impossible for David to snatch the robe, slice off a piece and lay the it back down. Normally, cutting of a piece of the king's robe would be a clear sign of impudence and insubordination. Instead, David used it to show his humility and his subordination to Saul.

8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

Unless this cave had a rear exit (which it very well might have had), David is taking a huge risk in exposing himself to Saul. Saul could order his 3,000 men to enter the caves and track them down.

9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

Notice how David *wisely* does not accuse Saul of personally initiating the campaign against David. Instead, David lets him off the hook by implying that Saul was the victim of following some bad advice. "Saul, why did you listen to those advisors who said that I am out to kill you and seize the throne?"

10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that YHWH had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and *some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is YHWH'S anointed.*

11 Moreover, my father, ...

Notice how David addresses him as "my father." Saul was his father-in-law, but this could also be meant as a term of respect for one who is his mentor and elder.

11 ... see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that *there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I*

have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.

12 YHWH judge between me and thee, and YHWH avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

Vowing not to harm Saul, David continues speaking softly and with compassion for his king.

16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

Saul was touched. He called David his son. He melted in sorrow and shame for his past behavior.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

This is the first time that Saul has publicly voiced his recognition that David would be king. He then seeks the same promise from David that Jonathan had obtained earlier from David, that David would not exterminate his posterity. David obliges.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by YHWH, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

David knew intuitively that Saul's remorse and sorrow were only temporary. It would only last until his next bout of madness. Thus David remained in the caves for a season. The age of Pentecost has been two millennia of Sauls soiling the church with their idolatry. This was part of God's Plan. The time is now drawing near when the church will be purged of idolatry and witchcraft in all its forms. Sauls will fall and give way to the greater David and the barley saints.

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