



FEED MY SHEEP

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

Issue #59

October 2003

Living among Enemies

We saw in last month's FMS how the fugitive David had a second opportunity to strike and kill King Saul but he did not do so. Instead, David took the king's javelin and his jug—his scepter and his water. This action was sufficient to let Saul know that David could have killed him but did not. Saul was touched by David's kindness and vowed not to pursue him anymore. David, however, knew that Saul's word was only as good as the mood he was in. When the evil spirit from God would trouble Saul again, David knew that his own life would be in danger. Thus, David decides to exile himself.

KJV 1 Samuel 27:1 And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.

Isn't this strange? It appears that David is having a crisis of faith. He has just been delivered the second time from the clutches of Saul. In fact, not only was he delivered but David was able to get so close to Saul as to remove his spear-scepter. We in hindsight can easily see how the providence of God was protecting David. But David's faith is faltering.

The timing is curious as well. It seems to be a pattern that we can discern in the lives of more than one of the great men of the Bible. It is the fact that anything from mild to severe depression or despondency and lack of faith settle in the mind of a saint almost *immediately after* some great victory. In addition to the case of

David here, we find a similar crisis in the life of Jonah when he was sitting under the gourd (Jonah 4:5-11).

There was also Elijah and his great showdown with the priests of Baal at Mt. Carmel. It was a great victory, but what happened immediately after that? Elijah got depressed (1 Kings 19). He journeyed all the way down to Mt. Sinai in Arabia and sat in a cave and felt sorry for himself. He assumed that he was the only prophet left who was on Yahweh's side.

Perhaps this is only illustrating a common human condition. It reminds me of what people generally refer to as the "letdown" after a big weekend. For example, perhaps you've had friends or relatives come in for a visit...people you have not seen for quite a while. For weeks or months before the event, you are looking forward to this weekend with great joy and anticipation. The weekend comes, the guests arrive, you have a wonderful time (a victory, if you will) and then you have a "blue Monday." Everyone has experienced that sort of thing.

So perhaps it is just part of the human condition that we are seeing being manifested in David here. After all, shouldn't David have known by now, that God has him in His very special "witness protection program?" After all, Samuel had anointed him to be king. David should have had the faith that God would continue to deliver him from Saul. But instead, he thinks just the opposite: "Omigosh, I've had two close calls now and I'm sure Saul will get me the next time, so I'd better flee over to the land of the Philistines!"

Of course, hindsight is 20-20 and who of us can

claim with any certainty that we would have done any better, had we been in David's shoes? I look at my own past and can remember examples of when my faith faltered when it should have been strong, so I am not about to cast any stones at David. What we can learn from this is that David, one of the premier prototypes of an overcomer, demonstrates once again that being an overcomer does *not* mean that we can never fail or falter, lest we be excluded from the ranks of the overcomers in training.

We can take comfort in that knowledge. I know that some of us begin to despair from time to time and we think: "Oh, what's the use? This is just too hard. I've failed again." I've been there, too. And I won't claim that I will never be in that emotional state again; it is very possible, even probable.

However, when we read that David, the model overcomer, went through these very same thoughts and periods of depression, it ought to reassure and re-inspire us that even if *our* faith falters, *God's* promises never fail. He will never leave us nor forsake us. I know that at the low points, we feel like He *has* forsaken us, but that is all part of the trials of overcoming. So, *rest... assured* that victory awaits you!

2 And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that *were* with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.

David had tried to find refuge with this Philistine king once before. It happened shortly after King Saul allowed Doeg the Edomite to kill the 85 priests of Nob and all their families.

1 Samuel 21:10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

There is no reason to think this is not the same Achish, king of Gath, in both cases. It could not have been that many years between these two events. But on David's first attempt to seek asylum with Achish, the Philistine officers recognized David immediately as the great warrior chieftain who had defeated them. So on that occasion, David panicked and pretended to be insane. He let spit dribble down his beard and he scratched his fingernails on the doors of the gate. Achish fell for it and they let him go.

Lesson: if you as an overcomer find yourself

needing to seek refuge among "the Philistines," be prepared to be most unwelcome. Have an exit strategy. On this, his second attempt, David, as an overcomer-in-training, will dwell with the enemy for a considerable period of time. It would prove to be a time of rest and recuperation from the stress of being on the run for so long.

But it would also afford David the opportunity to learn much about how Israel's enemies *thought*, and what their strengths and weaknesses were. Undoubtedly, there were many more things he would learn during this time which would serve him in good stead when he ascended to the throne of Israel.

1 Samuel 27:3 And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

4 And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.

The way I read that last clause, it is implying that had David continued to remain in Israel territory, that Saul would have continued to seek to destroy him. So David was actually correct. He *was* safe from Saul while with the Philistines, but it might be a case of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, which possibility we will revisit shortly.

To set the stage, look at the symbolism again. David now lives among the Philistines. In the literal aspect, the Philistines are a national enemy of Israel. This would signify God's overcomers living under the protection of the national enemies of Israel! Isn't that ironic! That has many implications in our day.

Symbolically, and on a personal and spiritual level, the Philistines were represented by five giants, Goliath and his brothers, who were their champions. The Philistines symbolize the flesh and the world. Our five senses are the giants in our flesh which can overcome and defeat us.

David is now actually coming to Gath, to live in the land of the Philistines. Did you know that the word Gath means "winepress?" That's why I said David was jumping out of the frying pan of Saul and into the fire. Spiritually, he is going into the winepress to get the juice squeezed out of him. Because, as you know, the Father wants both bread *and* wine for His table.

Furthermore, since the Philistines represent the flesh and the world, this would symbolize Christians who are overcomers-in-training who live in the world, but are not of the world. Overcomers are tested wherever they find themselves. If they stay among Israelites (“with the church folks”), they will be persecuted; but if they exile themselves to “the world,” they will find their faith tested in other ways. If Father has you in training, dear reader, you cannot avoid it!

We also note that David had 600 men and their families with him. Six is the number of man and imperfection. This is a time when David is not perfected yet. He has not ascended to the throne. Later, we find that after David ascends the throne, there are numerous places where the number seven is associated with him. Seven speaks of perfection. This is not to say that David became perfect once he ascended the throne, but as a type and shadow, it symbolizes the perfection to come for those overcomer saints when they “ascend” into their glorified bodies and they are co-rulers with the Greater David over all the earth.

Gath means *winepress* and the head honcho’s name is Achish. The lexicon gives two meanings for *Achish*: one is “I will blacken” which is a metaphor for saying “I will terrify.” Isn’t the battle against our flesh often terrifying? in the sense that it is such a *vicious* and *unrelenting* battle. It is terrifying to us.

But the other meaning of *Achish*, the king of the winepress, is—note this—“only a man.” With the spirit of Christ in us, we can do all things, including that greatest battle of all: overcoming our own flesh. The “old man” is terrifying to us, and yet he is “only a man,” which is as nothing compared to strength of the Almighty whose Spirit dwells within us.

Personally, I have not yet overcome the Achish in me. And I feel confident in stating that no one else I know has *completely* overcome yet either, but I have come to recognize that it is a *progressive* victory. One step at a time. Little steps added to little steps eventually add up to a mile.

Verse 3 states that David and his entire retinue of 600 men and their families actually dwelt with Achish in Gath for a time. How uncomfortable that must have been for David and his whole company. Achish himself was no doubt friendly towards them, but you can imagine how the rest of the Philistines must have looked upon them. It had to have been with

great suspicion and distrust, if not downright enmity.

Philistine children probably bullied the Israelite youngsters and taunted them with racial slurs. This little contingent of Israelites were surrounded by people who worshiped pagan deities—a true test of faith. Moreover, to provide free housing for 601 immigrant families in the city of Gath must have put some strain on the Philistine royal treasury—not an optimal situation. Before long, David proposes a change. Notice how he puts his proposal in terms favorable to Achish.

5 And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

In other words, “Look, Achish, we are really becoming a financial burden on you here in Gath. How about giving us some place where we can get out of your hair and pay our own way?” This is another example of the wisdom of David. It is a clever ploy.

What David secretly wanted was to be out of eyesight of the king of Gath, and out of his direct control, so that David could pretend he was fighting against King Saul, while in actuality he would be trying his best to avoid Saul’s men, and not raise a finger against them or any other Israelites. The ploy worked.

6 Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day.

Actually, Ziklag was originally part of the inheritance of the tribes of Judah and Simeon, but it was conquered at some point by the Philistines. And now it is coming back under the control of Israel via David.

7 And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

David was there for 16 months. What did he and his 600 men do during all that time? Well, having inherited 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats from Nabal’s business when he married Abigail, David had plenty to keep him busy. However, he also made time to attack some of Israel’s enemies. The fact that they were Israel’s enemies was reason enough, but David probably also did not want his men getting rusty in their

martial skills, so off they went. It is also a possibility that there was some provocation for David's invasion, but the sacred writ simply does not record it.

8 And David and his men went up, and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.

The land of the Philistines was on the Mediterranean Sea coast. The Geshurites lived on its southern border. They were in a mountainous district opposite the seacoast on the northeast, which would have put them also adjacent to the southwestern border of the territory of Judah. So David is going to battle in an area quite close to his own people of Judah. This is important, as we will see shortly.

9 And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

10 And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites.

We know the Judahites are of Israel, and some might remember the Kenites, but who are these Jerahmeelites? First, let's review the Kenites. Moses' father-in-law was described as a Kenite. Elsewhere, he is called a Midianite. The Midianites were descended from Abraham through his wife, Keturah. When the Israelites came up out of Egypt, the Amalekites were vicious and cruel towards them, but the Kenites were friendly and helpful, obviously due to the family connection with Moses.

Then recall how when King Saul was ordered to exterminate the Amalekites and he kept King Agag alive, that before the attack, Saul warned the Kenites who were living among the Amalekites to flee. So the Kenites were always friendly to Israel, although their ancestry was not through Jacob-Israel, it was through Abraham.

The Jerahmeelites were once again actual Israelites, since they were of Jerahmeel who was the son of Hezron, who was the son of Pharez, who was the son of Judah. So David was telling a whopper of a lie here in verse 10 in order to win favor with Achish.

11 And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines.

David did not leave anyone alive to be brought back as a captive or slave to Achish and who would tell the truth of who the victims were. So Achish is left with the impression that David and his men went out to the southlands of Judah and massacred Israelites and Kenites so as to continue being a thorn in the side of King Saul. Whereas David desired to do no such thing. Instead, he had actually massacred Israel's enemies and left no survivors to report otherwise.

12 And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

Well, the deception worked up to this point, but will it last? We'll see in the next chapter. Meanwhile, a point about these Geshurites is in order. According to Joshua 13:2, the land of the Geshurites was included in the territorial imperative of Israel. It was to be "ethnically cleansed," to use a modern, highly charged, politically incorrect term. But that's what it was. When God said to drive out or slay all the inhabitants, *that* is ethnic cleansing, if there ever was such a thing.

In addition to Ahinoam and Abigail, David later on married several other women as well. One of David's beloved, albeit rebellious sons was Absalom. Curiously, we find in 2 Samuel 3:3 that his mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur!

Therefore, Absalom was David's son through a non-Israelite woman, a Geshurite. Even though it says that David killed *all* the Geshurites, it has to mean that only those in that particular area at that time were killed. Obviously, David did not kill *all* the Amalekites either because they continue well into the pages of Bible history. Our character studies of David and Saul will continue.

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.