



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Life of David: Sermon #19

2 Samuel 6

“The Restoration of the National Worship”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning to 2 Samuel chapter 6 and reading the entire chapter of 23 verses. In many ways, I think, this chapter is a chapter that we in Believers Chapel should pay particular attention to and I hope that the lessons of it strike home to all of us.

“Again David gathered all the choice men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name, the Lord of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim. So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the Lord on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon’s threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the

ark of God. And David became angry because of the Lord’s outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah [Or outburst against Uzzah.] to this day. David was afraid of the Lord that day and he said, ‘How can the ark of the Lord come to me?’ So David would not move the ark of the Lord with him into the City of David, but David took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. The ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months. And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, ‘The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God.’ So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness.”

It is obvious that the three months that the ark stayed in the house of Obed-Edom gave David a chance to reflect on what had happened and, probably, also to do a little scriptural reconnoitering, until finally he had some inkling at least of why Uzzah putting out his hand to touch the ark and the cart brought his instant death. And so now, David will seek to bring up the ark, again, to Jerusalem. But this time he will do it more carefully.

“And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep. Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod.”

That is underlined because, evidently, he took off his royal garments and was clad only in the ephod and specific reference is made to it as we shall see in a moment.

“So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. Now as the ark of the Lord came into the

City of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, [And, of course, she was David’s wife.] looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. So they brought the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.”

You can see how careful David is, now, after the tragedy of Uzzah. He sacrifices just as they leave the place where the ark was located and now, as he arrives, he also sacrifices again.

“And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, ‘How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!’ So David said to Michal, ‘It was before the Lord, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the house of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the Lord.’”

This word probably means something like to celebrate. It really, essentially, means to dance but to dance, to celebrate is the point, not specially playing music.

“And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor.”

You really get an insight into the heart of King David when you reflect on these words that were spoken to Michal.

“Therefore Michal the daughter of the Lord [Saul] had no children to the day of her death.”

Whether that is, specifically, a judgment here, or whether that is just mentioned of the original condition of Saul’s house is not stated by our author and we will not add anything to what Scripture has said at that point.

Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the ministry of the word of God to us, and we thank Thee for this great chapter in which we are reminded again of the importance of Holy Scripture, for the life before our great God that pleases Thee. Help us, Lord, to be submissive to Thy truth for we know that our nature is such, even though redeemed, to turn aside from the way that is pleasing to our Triune God.

Enable us, Lord, to not bring in any new carts into the worship of our Lord God and help us to be satisfied with the worship set forth in holy Scripture. We thank Thee for the day in which we live and for the day in which Thou has placed us. We pray that each one of us who by grace has been brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ may be instrumentalities of the furtherance of the divine purpose. We thank Thee for these chapters, which again remind us of the great things that Thou art accomplishing in the history of the human race. And we thank Thee for the way in which the things that happen glorify our great God in Heaven. And so today, Lord, on the first day of the week, we worship Thee, the Father, through the Spirit, in the Name of the Son of God, who loved us and has washed us from all our iniquities.

We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ. May the testimony concerning the Lord Jesus run freely today. May there be responsiveness on the part of those who do not know him, and responsiveness, especially, on our part as well. Deliver us from the indifference that so frequently characterizes us and help us to have something of the spirit of David, that spontaneous exuberance of the glory of divine election and sovereign grace.

We pray Thy blessing upon the sick today. Encourage them, meet their needs, give wisdom and guidance to those who minister to them and give healing as it should please Thee, give comfort and consolation. We commit all of those to Thee, especially those who have requested our prayers, but for the whole church of Jesus Christ, in its sufferings as well as in its blessings. O God, be with us and glorify Thy name through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

And we pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] I think that most of us who have been around the Church of Jesus Christ for any length of time would be willing to grant that the restoration of the primacy of spiritual truth is the greatest hope for the land of the United States of America, for the Church of Jesus Christ, and also for you and for me, individuals within the Body of Christ.

Our subject for today is “Operation Ark” or “The National Worship Restored.” The ark, for those of you who have read the Scriptures, you do not need any description. The ark was the symbol of God’s presence in the tabernacle that God told Moses to construct. There were pieces of furniture that went out in the yard and then there were pieces of furniture inside. And, in the holiest of all was the Ark of the Covenant, just a simple little box, actually, made of acacia wood and with a gold plate on top, which was the mercy seat. And inside, were contained the tables of the Law and Moses’ rod or Aaron’s rod that budded, and it was the place into which the High Priest, alone, was able to enter once a year as the covenant was renewed on the Day of Atonement. It was the symbol of God’s

presence in Israel, for there he had said when the tabernacle was constructed that he would meet with Israel in the tabernacle. And, specifically, it was stated that he would speak with them in the holiest of all, where the ark was located. And so the Ark of the Covenant became the great symbol of God’s presence in Israel.

It was, of course, the Ark that led the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land. And so the picture of the Levites carrying the Ark on their shoulders and the children of Israel following, as they went into the land, was designed to glorify the presence of God in the people of God, the nation Israel.

Of course, fundamentally, the Ark of the Covenant was designed to signify some spiritual truth that finds its fullest expression in the New Testament. The two tables of the Law were designed to bring Israel to the knowledge of their sin, as Paul states it in more than one place. “By the Law is the full knowledge of sin.” And the tables of the Law within the covenant reminded Israel of the broken law and of the fact that they could never keep the Law of Moses. The fact that the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat above the Ark was the place and the place where atonement was made, was designed to represent the fact that God, in marvelous grace, has made it possible for men, in spite of their sin, to find acceptance with the Lord God. So when the blood of the animals was sprinkled on the mercy seat, atonement was made.

And then, of course, the picture of the children of Israel being guided, and the picture of Aaron’s rod that budded, reflecting the Living God, pictured the Lord God at the head of his people, bringing them into the land that he had promised them. It became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things and bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect, through sufferings. And so the picture of Israel going into the land with the Ark of the Covenant leading them was a great picture and remembered by spiritual Israelites and remembered, also by spiritual members of the church of God, as reflecting what God does for his people.

It has been said that it was the palladium of Israel. And you may remember that the Palladium was the statue of Pallas Athena. And the presence of the Palladium in the midst of the city of Troy, was designed to ensure the safety forever of the city of Troy. So the Ark of the Covenant is the symbol of God’s presence and the symbol, also of the fact that those who trust this God shall never lack for spiritual life.

Now, there was a sad parallel between the history of Israel and the history of the United States of America today. We say the restoration of the primacy of spiritual truth is the greatest hope of the land. It surely is the greatest hope of the United States of America. I must confess, I’ve never been convinced the United States was founded on Christian, truly distinctive Christian principles, although, many Christian principles may be found within the establishment of this country and many Christians were involved in it. So we do not have a complete parallel with the children of Israel, who were a divinely created people for a specific purpose.

I can say this, however, I think with general agreement among you who are Christians, that our condition as a nation can only be met, that is, with the blessing of God, similarly with the nation Israel in the exhortation of the Lord God and the Scriptures, which he has given to us, and those Scriptures in which we find the principles of human sin and divine atonement for sin. That really is the origin, the source of the origin of the people of God. As we look out over the United States of America today and reflect upon the great principles of the word of God, we can see so many ways in which the United States has fallen by the wayside. I’m not speaking about the recession. I’m not talking about the greed and profligacy of the years of Reagan. Reagan has become the excuse for so many people today. What I’m talking about is the corruption of our government and the corruption of business, the things that have been happening, for example, just a simple example, in the State of Rhode Island, recently, to transfer a few things to the East from the South, illustrate the point. That is a state that is almost in the hands of big, big crime. We have rebellion against authority. We have all kinds of crime, specifically

immoral sex with the shattering of family relationships, abortion, AIDS, all draining our economic systems of unnecessary expense. And all of that you are well acquainted with, perhaps even more so than I am.

But turning to the church of Jesus Christ, the truth in the church, and even in the evangelical church, today, is belittled and minimized. One can hear constantly statements such as, “We do not need theology. We need something that ministers to us in a practical way.” And while the truth of the word of God is belittled, O, if Uzzah had known just a little bit of theology, he would have lived a much longer span of life.

Entertainment, on the other hand, is magnified, while the truth is belittled. We are a people in great need of God. Uzzah’s act of putting his hand upon the cart has long been thought to underline an important spiritual error. I have it expressed in the Bible that I use, in the heading over this chapter, doing a right thing in a wrong way. And I think there is great truth in that and I think, I hope, we shall see that illustrated as we look, now, at the chapter.

The first 11 verses give us miscarriage of a noble goal. It was an act of piety for David to seek to bring the Ark back to Zion. Jerusalem has now become the capital; Zion the dwelling place, the palace of the King is there on Zion. And so what he has done politically has been very, very successful, guided by God, undoubtedly, because you see, with the Twelve Tribes of Israel what you have is what someone has called centrifugal tendencies, the tendencies of each of the Tribes to go their own way. But now, as a result of what has happened, the Twelve are at least outwardly united, and so David thinks immediately of the Ark of the Lord, because that spiritual center around, which if he can draw the nation around that spiritual center, they will have not simply political unity but they will have something even more fundamental, they will have a spiritual unity.

So you look at it and you say, this is an act of statesmanship on David’s part, to come to Jerusalem and make it the capital. And then, it’s an act of piety for him to desire



to have the Ark situated there, on Zion, around which the worship of all of the Tribes may be gathered and the Tribes in the process unified.

So he determines to bring the Ark up from the place where it's been for a lengthy period of time. You may remember, the Philistines had captured the Ark, but the Ark was such an unhealthy thing for them to have around that they finally decided that they would give it up, and they put the Ark on a new cart. And they said if the Ark goes toward Bethshemish, we'll do nothing about it, because Bethshemish was toward Israel and the Ark, of its own accord, with the animals, marched right off to Bethshemish, reminding them that their gods were not gods, but the true God was Jehovah. But it had been in the home of Abinadab, one of the Levites, and so it had been there for a considerable period of time. And now, David desires to bring it back to his capital city, Jerusalem and Zion.

So they gathered together a number of people and they go down to Abinadab's house, in order to get the Ark and bring it home. And we read in verse 3, “They set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.” Isn't that striking? Twice! It's almost as if “I want you to get this point” the Holy Spirit says, notice the twofold occurrence of “the new cart”. A new cart? You might think, well, that's nice, a new cart. New things were things that you made for kings. But, it was on a cart.

And so I can just imagine, someone maybe back in the back saying, but aren't the Levites supposed to carry the ark? And someone else, not nearly so knowledgeable in Holy Scripture and not so concerned to carry out Holy Scripture said, why even the Philistines put the ark on a cart and everything was okay and God did nothing about it. So we'll just keep it on the cart. So they put the Ark of the Covenant on the new cart, and they start the journey back toward Mount Zion.

And David, his own sensibilities are not sharp enough to realize what's at stake here. And so he and the rest of them play music before the Lord on all kinds of

instruments of fir wood, on harps, stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, what sistrums are, I didn't have time to look up, and on cymbals.

So everything is going wonderfully, until the animals carrying the Ark in the new cart stumble. Now, mind you, this is no performance. We're not to think of this as a performance, like in the Christian church today, we have great performances of entertainment. This is exuberant enthusiasm that comes from the heart, out of worship for the Lord, for this great spiritual event that is taking place. It's far different from a choir and an orchestra playing a number to entertain a crowd in our modern churches. So I do not think that we have the right to look at this and say, “Ah, we should have the things that David had,” instruments of wind, harp, string, music, tambourines and even sistrums, if we can find out what that is, and cymbals, as well. No, no. This is not entertainment. This is exuberant thanksgiving that comes from a spiritual understanding of truth, to have the Ark back in Jerusalem.

But when the animal stumbled, it appeared to Uzzah to be in danger of collapsing, Uzzah reached out his hand and took hold of it. And the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah and God struck him there, for his err, you could say for his irreverence, and he died there by the Ark of God.

You know, divine judgment is not always clear to human beings, but there is one thing we can always count upon, and that is the judge of all the earth does right. And while we may not understand specifically why this happened, I think one can come to understanding of this, but I'm speaking generally, there are many acts of judgment for which we do not have adequate understanding, but we can be sure that they are right if they are performed by the Lord God.

You think of Dathan and Abiram, who lost their lives because of disobedience to the word of God. You think of Nadab and Abihu, who also transgressed against the Lord God and lost their lives. Korah, in the same rebellion with Dathan and Abiram, Ananias in New Testament times, so God judges and it may be strange to us, but God does right.

One thing I noticed about the Lord Jesus. Occasionally, he would speak from the standpoint of the knowledge of what was in the hearts and minds of individuals with whom he was dealing. Later on, the Scriptures say, Jesus knew what they were thinking. And so in instances of divine judgment, we have to remember, God knows the heart and he knows the irreverence of the heart of Uzzah, when we do not. And so this is a judgment that God performed, and the least that we can do is to say, I don't understand it, but I'm sure that it was a just judgment because the God of this earth always does that which is right.

We tend to have a kind of theology in our day that glorifies the love of God and neglects, terribly, the judgment of God. I suggest to you, it's bad theology based on a defective knowledge of the word of God, to represent the Lord God in an exclusive aspect of mildness. He is not that kind of God.

And so Uzzah takes out his hand, touches the cart and the Ark, and loses his life. The God of the Bible cannot be pushed around. The God of the Bible cannot be manipulated. That's the truth that should be evident to us. In fact, the idea that we must make God an individual who is at our beck and call, and serve us, is very close to blasphemy, because it makes God, essentially, a god constructed after our own thoughts. So the idea that we can, by our particular type of activity, as a professing Christian, make God do this and make God do that is very close to blasphemy.

We find some of that in certain aspects of the charismatic movement today in which with certain little phrases, we are supposed to make God our servant, to do that which is pleasing to us in a material way. But I think there is something even deeper than that here because, you see, these men are men who should have known. In fact, I imagine if you had gotten Uzzah and Ahio and others around and asked them questions about how the Ark should be carried, their minds would have gone back to Numbers chapter 4, for example, in which it's stated that they were to carry the Ark in a certain way. They would carry the Ark with the staves on the shoulders of the Levites. They

were not to touch it, not to touch any of those pieces of furniture. They were to carry them in a specific way. And perhaps they might have even said, “Oh, yes, we know that the Bible says that, but surely we have some freedom and the Philistines put the Ark on a cart, didn’t they, and God didn’t do anything about that.”

So we’ll forget what Moses wrote in Numbers chapter 4. Well, what does that reflect? That reflects something even more significant, to my mind, that reflects what I would like to suggest is the deepening indifference of the people of Israel at that time to the things of the Lord God. Saul’s day was a day of spiritual degeneracy, as we know. And this has affected one after another of these individuals. And so, consequently, the result is the word of God does not have the place of preeminence that it should have, and therefore, something like this can happen.

I don’t think that there is anything worse than to see professing Christians, one generation after another, and I’m old enough to see two, three of them now, and to see the older generation, godly men and women, who sought by God’s help to follow Holy Scripture as best they could, regarded Holy Scripture as the primary thing in their lives, and then see the next generation, who know all the language of their fathers, their grandfathers, know all of the language but, nevertheless, speak lightly of the things of the Lord. And finally, when third generation children come, even less devotion to the Lord God, the spirit of irreverence that characterizes the people. May I suggest something to you? We have something of that in Believers Chapel. It distresses me a bit when I come in Sunday morning and come up on this platform and I hear the noise of the people in the pews and I hear the noise of the people out in the hall, when I think it would be better for each one of us to enter this particular place where we are going to hear the word of God, in a spirit of reverence and a spirit of prayer in which we ask the Lord God to open our hearts and be responsive to the truth of God, and to ask Him to help us to remember that He is the Lord God of the Heaven and the Earth, before whom we meet.

So here, in the case of Uzzah, there is the end result of forgetfulness, carelessness, negligence, the adopting of a method that seems most expedient. It's expedient because it was previously sanctioned, was it not? When the Philistines put the Ark on a cart? So all of that is the kind of rationalization that leads, ultimately, to the kind of death and death, in his case was physical, the kind of death that marks a Christian who has departed from the things of the Lord God.

Now, David was three months back in the land. He was angered by what had happened. You can sense some of the childishness, perhaps, of David's faith every now and then. He was not as instructed in the word of God as we are, because we have maybe twenty-eight hundred centuries since that time, with further revelation of the word of God. A remarkable man, I would hope that I would have the same love for the Lord God, or at least in measure, as David had, even at this time. But he was puzzled by this and angered by it. And, it is certainly true that when a man is angry, he does not think logically as a rule.

So for three months, David is back in Jerusalem, and he's rethinking things, and it seems to come home to him, particularly when someone says to him, Did you know that when you put the Ark in the house of Obed-Edom, why, his whole household has been blessed by the presence of the Ark. And David, rethinking things, has come to the conclusion that perhaps they should go back and bring the Ark up, but this time, we'll bring it up in the way in which God says the Ark should be carried. Maybe some simple little person on the side, that no one paid any attention to, one day said to King David, “You know, I was reading in Moses the other day, and it says the Ark should be carried by the Levites, on the shoulders. Maybe that has something to do with Uzzah's death?” And David reflects on it and comes to the conclusion that perhaps that's right.

And so he goes back and now he's going to bring the Ark up the second time. But I want to say just a word about that statement in verse 11, “And the Lord blessed Obed-Edom and all his household.” You see, what David has been doing was

complaining of providence. That was God’s providential act in Uzzah’s case, and whether he understood it or not was not the point. The God of the earth does always that which is right. So really, he’s been complaining against the providence of God. So often, we do that you know, when things happen that happen contrary to the way we think they ought to be, or the way we would be pleased that they should happen, and so really what we are doing is complaining about God’s providential dealings with us.

But here is Obed-Edom, and his house is being blessed. You know, it’d be interesting to know exactly what happened to Obed-Edom, when he was told by David, we’re going to put the Ark in your house, Obed-Edom, one of the Levites. Oh, he’d say, wait a minute. Before you do it, I’ve got to prepare a room for it. Our house is a mess. And so he went in his house, picked out the best room, cleaned it out, took all the other furniture out. They brought the Ark in there and every day, morning and night, Obed-Edom and the members of his household reflected upon the fact, the Ark is in our house. That which symbolizes the presence of the Lord God, that which our people used as our guide as we marched out of the land, God’s in our house, the symbol of his presence, where the blood of the goat on the day of atonement and the bullocks was poured, sprinkled, that Ark is there in our house.

So it was cleansed, prepared, put in the finest room, and I’m sure, that every one of those Levite sons were also purified in order that they, too, might live the kind of life that would be comparable to having the Ark of the Covenant around. Honored. Happy. Obed-Edom, with the Ark in his house, someone has said.

Now, I want to ask you a question? What’s greater? To have the Ark of Israel in the house? Or to have the third person of the Trinity indwelling our hearts? Which is best? What you might do ostensibly and outwardly, for the presence of the Ark of the Lord, is of lesser significance than what you as a believing Christian should do with God, the Holy Spirit, indwelling your body. Never forget that, my Christian friends! Never

forget that! This is the Holy home of the Holy Spirit. No wonder Obed-Edom was blessed.

Someone has put it this way, “The Ark of the Covenant paid well for the entertainment.” You get the point? The Ark of the Covenant paid well for the lodging, for the entertainment. And we can be sure, that having been indwelt by God, the Holy Spirit, if he has given his place in our lives as he should have, the pay is very well, provided by him, the blessing of God in the life of the believer who recognizes the presence of that Holy Guest, within our bodies.

And, of course, if we had time, we could talk a great deal about how this is true of the local church as well, because the local church is the place where God meets with his people. And it pays well, if we entertain him properly in our meetings and remember that he is there to bless.

Well, the writer goes on to describe, mission accomplished, in verses 12 through 19. David told about Obed-Edom’s blessing, meditation on the law and prayer, learning the truth, makes his second attempt. And now they make their way up to the city of Jerusalem and to the citadel on Zion. And it was a day of celebration.

Now, “As the Ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling about before the Lord. And she despised him in her heart.” The Hebrew expression there that is translated “whirling before the Lord” is the [indistinct] form of a verb that means to whirl around. And so as they were dancing along with the music, they were, evidently, going in little circles. And I understand there’s a tradition to the effect that someone shouted out, “Change your partners” at this point, but [Laughter] that’s not a very reliable tradition and so we’ll pass that by. This is not the beginning of square dancing, incidentally, but it was an exuberant enthusiasm on the part of people for what was happening.

So David’s calm gaze on the facts, illuminated by the word, when his anger has assuaged a little, restored his spiritual sanity. And lowly Obed-Edom and the blessing in

his own home is responsible for further blessing for the nation itself. But Michal is very displeased, and we'll say something about that in a moment. But the Ark is brought home. It's set in a temporary tabernacle that David had constructed for it, evidently, similar to Moses wilderness one. The sacrifices by David, probably, were given at his cost and at his command, and he, himself, blesses them.

If you want to read something that David wrote which celebrates the coming of the Ark to Mount Zion, read Psalm 24. That's the great psalm where we have the statements like, “Lift up the gates, the Ark is coming in, who is able to enter, those that are pure of heart,” and so forth. All constructed, evidently, with this particular time in mind.

Now, sad dissent at home. So as the Ark is brought in and David distributes blessings among the people in a material way, we read in the 20<sup>th</sup> verse.

“David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, “How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!”

Someone has said, the most perfect human condition is usually marred by some blemish. And the blemish in David's house was the presence of Michal in the humor in which she was in. That verse that we have just read and the statement that it contains of Michal contains one of the outstanding incidences of sarcastic scorn in the word of God. Listen to what she says, with that in mind.

“How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!”



What was David’s offense? Disrobing himself of the royal threads, and being clad only in the ephod, the linen ephod. And then, further, to do that in the presence of the others, and the maidservants, as well, inferior class of people, and for him to wear the inferior dress and particularly, do it like “one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself.” It’s an interesting adjective that is described this individual. It’s from the Hebrew word *reyq*, which means essentially, empty. It’s the same thing that our Lord uses in its Greek form *rhaka*, when he describes fools in the Sermon on the Mount. So the individuals are empty fellows, they’re base fellows, they’re reyq fellows, they’re empty in the sense as we would say in our language as “Air heads”. They have nothing in them. So he does that like one of the air heads, shamelessly uncovering himself.

Now, David’s answer is most striking because it illustrates for us the kind of man that David was, in the midst of all his failures, and he has many failures. Notice what he says. He says, “It was before the Lord.” I wasn’t doing it before the maid servants. It was doing it before the Lord. And I was doing it before the Lord who chose me instead of your father, and all his house, Michal, to appoint me ruler of the people of the Lord, over Israel.” So he says, “It’s not because I wanted to display myself to the maidservants, I wanted to indicate to the Lord God, my exuberant enthusiasm over what is transpiring. We are bringing the Ark, signifying the presence of the Lord, back to Mount Zion and establishing it there, as the center of worship for the true God for the children of Israel.”

Furthermore, he goes on to say, “And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor.” In other words, if it comes to a revelation of exactly what I am before the Lord God, I’ll humble myself even more. But I’ll tell you one thing,” I don’t want to put David’s words in my mouth but I think this is the way I would have said it, “and, furthermore, Michal, you’ll discover that those people, those maidservants that you think so little of, they’ll be spiritually intelligent enough to thank God for what has happened. They’ll understand.”

The chapter concludes with, “Therefore, Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.” Evidence, at least, that God’s blessing was not upon her.

Now, we have a few minutes, I’d like to just sum up a few points that are important. What a magnificent insight into the tender piety and the warm spirit of King David, so harmonious with the feelings that animate so many of his psalms. If you understand this particular incident, I think, you will understand the spirit that caused him to write so many magnificent psalms that have blessed for so many centuries the people of God. Psalm 68, Psalm 132 is a reflection upon this particular incident. Psalm 26:8 was the ruling passion of David: “Lord, I have loved the habitation of your home, and the place where your glory dwells.”

Sometimes you think that maybe David was a bit harsh speaking to Michal like he did. I don’t think so. I think he was speaking truth. If there is anything about King David that might be faulted, it’s the fact that he was at certain points, not as harsh as he should have been with his own children, Amnon and Absalom.

As for Michal, King Saul’s daughter, she cared for David, at least in the opening days of their relationship long ago, but she didn’t care for Jehovah. She valued the royal estate. She longed for the prominence that having the beautiful garments gave to her. She liked that. She liked a Mercedes and her Jaguar and her what is it, Lamborghini, I don’t even know how to pronounce the names of some of these things. She loved all of the trappings, but at the same time, she didn’t care for the Lord Jehovah. And she forgot the most important thing and that is, that above King David is the Lord God. Never forget that! Never forget that, my Christian friend. No matter how high you may reach, there’s someone above that the Lord God. The titans of our industry and our mercantile world, the men who rule our armed forces, those who have great authority in our society, if they would just remember that there is someone above them, the Triune God of the Christian faith because that’s the reality of the spiritual world about us.

David saw clearly that the health of the nation rested, ultimately, on two things: enlightened statesmanship, guided by the Holy Spirit established his throne in Jerusalem, on Zion, and thus gathered together those Tribes that had those centrifugal tendencies to go off by themselves. But the second thing is the fundamental thing, and that is fidelity to Israel’s covenant God. Jerusalem first then the Ark, but the Ark even more important, how wise as we look back. Whether David understood all of this, I don’t know, but he was guided by a sovereign providence above him. And that was what was happening. Human activities are only safe when running in the channel of divine truth. Wealth, art, science, all of those things are subordinate to the truth of the word of God.

When individuals can construct images of the Lord Jesus Christ, bathing in urine, yes, we allow them liberty, but liberty is to be subordinate to the word of God. And our society does not know that truth and that’s why our society suffers; one of the reasons why our society suffers. You can be sure of that.

Good actions and good aims make for good believers. Good intentions do not justify forbidden actions. In the Church of Jesus Christ, as we gather and worship as a body of believers, we must be guided by the word of God. And if we are guided by the word of God, that’s the first condition for the blessing of God. We may not reach the blessing of God because neglect, coldness of heart, and other things will produce deadness, but one thing we must have, harmony with divine truth.

Someone has said, “Uzzah was a type of all who, with good intentions, humanly speaking, with unsanctified minds, interfere in the affairs of the kingdom of God, from the notion that the affairs of the kingdom of God are in danger and with the hope of saving them. It is as one liberal Old Testament scholar has put it, but I think correctly, “It was the perceptive impulse of human nature, unregulated by a higher will.” He thought of the Ark as simply a piece of furniture. But it was more than that; it was the symbol of the presence of God. And when he disobeyed the word of God, he died justly.

It may seem strong and severe, but we need lessons. That’s why Ananias and Sapphira, suffered similarly. We need those lessons. O, my Christian friend, remember, when you proclaim that you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have proclaimed a certain most serious relationship to him. May God help us, each one of us, to look at our lives in the light of that and ask God to transform us continually.

If you are here today, and you have never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we remind you of what he has accomplished. He is the mercy seat, really. He is the person where and through whom God speaks to men. The blood on the Cross, sin paid, righteousness given, atonement made, through grace, all bound up in what Christ has done, typified by the mercy seat of the Old Testament.

May God, in his marvelous grace, cause you to recognize the fact that you’ve broken the law. You stand guilty before God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. You need a Savior. You need atonement. Christ has provided atonement. Come to him. Confess your sin and receive as a free gift, the forgiveness that is offered through the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that God in his marvelous grace may touch your heart and may that decision be made.

Let’s stand for the Benediction.

[Prayer] Father, as we reflect upon such solemn events as this, we are reminded again of the so many ways we have offended Thee, O God, deliver us. Make us a holy people, as Thou dost desire. May, in Thy marvelous grace, those that do not know Thee be drawn to Thee, and those who do drawn to Thee in a new and more holy and satisfying way. We commit ourselves to Thee for Thy blessing upon us.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.