

2 Samuel 6
September 10, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Have you ever gotten into trouble because of something you did, but you didn't know it was wrong? Although you would have apologized or explained that you didn't know better, but did it change the result of what you did? [Let people engage]

Transition: In today's text, David gets into trouble because of how he attempted to bring the ark of the covenant back to the City of David, and we will see God's wrath come upon Uzzah for touching the ark of the covenant to keep it from falling off the cart! Uzzah dies and our human reaction is SHOCK! Did Uzzah deserve death for trying to stabilize the ark when the oxen stumble? Let's read the text and see what truths we can internalize to make sense of this. Let's begin.

BOOK:

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

6 David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷ The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore, God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

⁸ Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah.

⁹ David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" ¹⁰ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.

¹² Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

¹⁷ They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings (traditionally peace offerings) before the LORD. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes.

²⁰ When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, “How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!”

²¹ David said to Michal, “It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD’s people Israel—I will celebrate before the LORD. ²² I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.”

²³ And Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

David bringing the ark back to Jerusalem is truly an eye-opening story. The life lessons it teaches help us to be more careful and dependent on God’s direction in life. To recap, the lessons you learned were that ignorance does not excuse us, and you can do the right thing the wrong way, and knowledge builds confidence.

What should surprise us is not that the Lord sometimes executes His wrath immediately but that He does not do so more often. We must be grateful for His gracious restraint when we sin.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (2 Sam 6). Victor Books.

You will want to read 1 Chron. 13, 15, and 16 as you study this chapter, since they give additional information about this important event in the life of David. Psalm 132:1–6 tells of David's intense desire to honor the Lord by returning the ark of the covenant to its proper place. For nearly twenty years, the ark had been in Kirjath-jearim (Baale of Judah, see 1 Sam. 6:21–7:2); so David prepared a special tent for it in Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:1) and prepared to return the sacred ark to its home. It took more than three months for him to finish the task (6:11).

I. David Displeases the Lord (6:1–11)

Certainly, it was a noble desire on David's part to bring the ark to Jerusalem, but it is possible to have "zeal without knowledge" and do a good work in a wrong way. To begin with, David did not consult the Lord; he consulted his political leaders (1 Chron. 13:1–4; note 2 Sam. 5:19 and 23). It appears that his main motive was to unify the nation under his rule rather than to glorify the Lord. Note in 1 Chron. 13:3 that David criticizes Saul for neglecting the ark. Perhaps this statement had something to do with the behavior of Saul's daughter, Michal, as recorded in 6:20ff. All the leaders and all the congregation agreed to David's plan, but this did not make the subsequent actions right.

David's next mistake was to ignore God's Word. Instead of asking the Levites to bear the ark on their shoulders (Num. 3:27–31; 4:15; 7:9; 10:21), he followed the worldly example of the Philistines and put the ark on a new cart (1 Sam. 6). God would permit the Philistines to use this method, since they were not His covenant people, instructed in the Word. But for the Jews to ignore the divine commands and imitate the heathen nations, was to invite disaster. How many Christians and local churches today "conform to the world" (Rom. 12:2) instead of "following the pattern" given by God from heaven? (Ex. 25:40) All of the people were enthusiastic and joyful, but this did not make their method right in the eyes of God. Israel wanted to be "like the other nations" (1 Sam. 8:5), and it led to tragedy.

Naturally, the human method of doing God's work eventually fails: the oxen stumbled and the ark was in danger of falling! This led to the third mistake: a man who was not a Levite touched the ark (see Num. 4:15). God had to judge him immediately or else sacrifice His glory and permit His Word to be violated. David's reaction to this sudden judgment reveals that his heart was not completely right with God in the matter; for, first he was angry, then he was fearful. Instead of pausing and seeking God's will to discover the reason for the judgment, David stopped the procession and quickly disposed of the ark. First Chronicles 26:1–4 indicates that the family of Obed-edom belonged to the Levitical family and could safely care for the ark.

One mistake led to another! How important it is to determine God's will and then follow God's way in accomplishing that will.

II. David Displays His Zeal (6:11–19)

During the three months' interim, David undoubtedly searched his heart and confessed his sins. He certainly turned to the Law to discover God's instructions for carrying the ark (1 Chron. 15:1–2, 12–13). God was blessing the household of Obed-edom, and David wanted that blessing

for the whole nation. This time he prepared the tent and also saw to it that the Levites were properly prepared for their task.

It is thought that Ps. 24 may have been composed to celebrate this event. From 1 Chron. 16:7ff we discover that Ps. 105 also grew out of this happy event. David was used of God to give expression to the joy of his heart, and his song glorified the Lord. The king laid aside his royal robes and led the procession in the humble garments of a Levite. The Levites took six paces and then paused, waiting to see if God would accept them; when no judgment came, they offered sacrifices and then proceeded the rest of the way to Jerusalem. It is obvious that David's "dancing" before the Lord was a spontaneous expression of his joy that the ark of God was restored to the people. Was it undignified for David to act in this way? Certainly not! While his actions are not given as examples for us to follow, we dare not go to the other extreme and rule out all outward expressions of joy and praise in our worship of God! While some believers may carry such activities to extremes, others may be guilty of grieving the Spirit by a false sobriety. Finally, David's "dancing" is in no way an excuse for modern "dancing"; for his actions were done before the Lord to glorify Him.

David blessed the people and gave them gifts to celebrate the return of the ark. Years before "the glory had departed"; now the Lord of Hosts (God of armies) was back in the midst of His people again. No wonder David rejoiced!

III. David Disciplines His Wife (6:20–23)

We have noted before that Michal, Saul's daughter, was never a suitable wife for David. She belonged to Saul's family and never really exhibited any faith in the God of Israel. First Samuel 19:13 indicates that she worshiped idols. David did not take her as his wife because of the leading of the Lord; he "won her" by slaying Goliath (1 Sam. 17:25) and by fulfilling Saul's murderous requirements (1 Sam. 18:17–27). This life-time alliance with the family of Saul meant trouble from the very beginning, as all ungodly alliances do (2 Cor. 6:14–18). The conflict between David and Saul is an illustration of the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and for David to be united to Michal meant yielding to the flesh.

It takes little imagination to see why Michal despised her husband. Certainly her sinful attitude had been growing within for years. She resented being married to her father's armor bearer as the "prize" for victory. She resented the fact that David had other wives (see 3:2–5; 5:13–16), all of whom were chosen after her marriage to David. Her father had died shamefully, and his enemy now reigned victoriously over all Israel. Of course, beneath all these reasons lay the basic reason: she was an unbeliever who did not understand or appreciate the things of the Lord (1 Cor. 2:14–16). She wanted David to display his royal power in great pomp and ceremony; he preferred to take his place with the common people and glorify the Lord.

Her harsh words to David after a great time of praise must have cut him deeply. It is usually true that Satan has a "Michal" to meet us whenever we have been rejoicing in the Lord and seeking to glorify Him. Her wicked words revealed a wicked heart, and David knew that she must be dealt with. "If your hand offends you, cut it off!" He realized that Michal would never help him in the work of the Lord; therefore, he put her away and refused to give her the privileges of marriage. For a Jewish woman to die without children was, of course, a great shame to her. David answered this fool according to her folly (Prov. 26:5).

When others criticize us, and we know our hearts and motives are right, we should not get discouraged. Had David been like some saints, he would have said, "All right, I just won't serve the Lord anymore! Even my wife doesn't appreciate it!" No, instead, we find in the next chapter

that David planned to do even more and build a temple for the Lord. This is the proper spirit for the Christian, to honor the Lord regardless of what obstacles Satan may put in the way.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 2 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 463-464) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

B. The return of the ark (chap. 6)

6:1–5. For 100 long years **the ark** of the covenant had been separated from the tabernacle and other places of worship. After its capture by the Philistines at Aphek (1 Sam. 4:11) it remained in Philistia for seven months, then briefly at Beth Shemesh, and the rest of the time at Kiriath Jearim. Now **David** had taken Jerusalem, a neutral place, and made it the political capital of the kingdom. All that remained was to retrieve **the ark**, place it in the tabernacle he would erect on Mount Zion, and declare Jerusalem the religious center of the nation as well.

David first went with **30,000** men to **Baalath of Judah** (the same as Kiriath Jearim; Josh. 15:9) to bring the ark **from the house of Abinadab**, its custodian. Described as that which bore **the name of God Himself**, **the ark** represented the presence of God who dwelled among His people in a special way (cf. Ex. 25:22). As such, it was to be handled with reverence, even in its transportation from place to place. The Law specified that it be carried by Levites who would bear it on their shoulders by means of poles passed through gold rings attached to the ark (Ex. 25:14; cf. Num. 4:15, 20). Even the Levites could not touch **the ark** or even look in it because of its holiness. Why David overlooked these requirements it is impossible to know, but he and **Uzzah and Ahio**, two descendants of **Abinadab**, placed the ark on a **cart** and proceeded, with great musical celebration, toward Jerusalem. The use of musical instruments (2 Sam. 6:5) was common in Israel's worship as may be seen, for example, in Psalm 150 where most of the same instruments are listed.

6:6–11. Along the way they passed over a rough outcropping of stone, a **threshing** place belonging to **Nacon** (or Kidon; 1 Chron. 13:9), and **the oxen stumbled**, threatening to throw **the ark** from the cart. Instinctively **Uzzah**, one of the attendants, laid **hold of the ark** to prevent its fall, an act of irreverence that cost him his life. The harshness of **the LORD's** discipline must be seen in the light of His absolute holiness which requires that sacred tasks be done in a sacred manner (cf. comments on 1 Sam. 6:19–7:2). Since God **had broken out** (*pāras*) in **wrath** on **Uzzah**, David named that place **Perez** ("outbreak against") **Uzzah**. David learned his lesson. He would not move **the ark** again until the Lord gave him instruction. It **remained**, therefore, **in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite** (a native of Gath) **for three months**.

6:12–15. At last the procession began again, this time according to divine requirement. As **the ark** was carried along, **David** offered sacrifice, dressed in priestly attire (**a linen ephod**), and dancing and shouting for joy with the Israelites. Here **trumpets** were played (cf. other instruments in v. 5). David was not a descendant of Aaron, and could not therefore ordinarily qualify to be a priest. He was, however, the anointed of the Lord, the founder of that messianic line that would be fulfilled in the King who would also embrace the offices of priest and prophet (7:12–16; 1 Sam. 2:35; Deut. 18:15–19). Some other Davidic kings functioned religiously as well, though not always properly (1 Kings 3:4; 8:62–63; 2 Chron. 26:16–19).

6:16–23. At length the procession made its way into Jerusalem itself. **Michal**, David's first wife and Saul's **daughter**, saw the **king ... dancing** excitedly **before the LORD** and, chagrined and embarrassed by his celebrating, later rebuked him for it (v. 20). **David** defended his actions,

affirming that he had done nothing wrong (vv. 21–22). **David** apparently separated from her and she never **had** any **children**. **Michal** had impugned his holy zeal to be nothing but exhibitionism, a charge which hurt him deeply. (See comments on 21:8.) **The ark** had been placed in a tabernacle which **David had** prepared (6:17). There the king continued his **burnt offerings and fellowship offerings** to the **LORD** and climaxed the festivities with food gifts, **a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins to each person in the assembled crowd**.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 123). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

The Ark of God (6:1–23). David wanted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem from the house of Abinadab, its home base after its capture by the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:1–2). With the ark in Jerusalem, the religious and political life of the nation could be unified around David.

The ark was called the “Name,” a reverential reference to the holy name of the Lord. The presence of the ark symbolized the presence of God. Because of its close association with God, the Israelites were instructed that only the Levites (sons of Kohath) should carry it and that it was not to be touched (see Exod. 25:12–15; Num. 4:15; 7:9; Deut. 10:8). The sons of Abinadab, Uzzah and Ahio, set the ark on a new cart, as the Philistines had done (1 Sam. 6:7), and guided it. Uzzah steadied the ark with his hand when it shifted on the cart. God struck him dead at the site of the ark because he showed disrespect for the holy things of God (see 1 Chr. 15:13).

Because of this unusual demonstration of God’s holiness and wrath, David learned to fear the Lord. He showed special homage by sacrificing a burnt offering after the ark had been carried six paces. The ark entered the city without incident only when the priests carried it properly. When David brought the ark into Jerusalem, he celebrated with dance and dressed humbly before the Lord.

Tatum, S. L. (1972). 2 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (p. 182). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Bringing the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1–23)

The passage—David did many things to establish Jerusalem as the capital of his united kingdom. One of the most important of these acts was the making of Jerusalem the religious center of the nation. The ark of the Lord was the symbol of his presence among his people.

David made the occasion one of national celebration. He took thirty thousand men with him to accompany the ark from Baale of Judah, where it had been since its return from having been captured by the Philistines in battle during the days of Saul. David and all of his company made music and danced for joy as the ark was placed on a new cart for its trip to Jerusalem.

When they came to a rough spot in the road, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and the ark shook. Uzzah reached out and touched the ark. He fell dead. David and his men regarded his death as an act of God. They believed the ark was too sacred to be touched except as prescribed as a part of worship. They halted the procession and took the ark aside into the house of Obed-edom. It stayed there three months. God blessed the house for the presence of the ark.

After three months David brought the ark of God into Jerusalem. He did so with ceremonies of worship. He sacrificed an ox and a fatling. He danced for joy before the Lord as the ark came into the city. It was placed in a specially prepared tent.

When Michal, Saul's daughter who had been given to David as a wife, looked out of her window and saw David leaping and dancing for joy, she despised him. After the great public ceremony when he returned to his home, Michal ridiculed David for his undignified abandon in worship. She accused him of vulgarity in public. David's reply to her indicates that he would no longer be a husband to her. She would remain in his house as a lonely, childless woman.

Special points—Why was Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark? The people in the days of David interpreted everything that happened as an act of God.

In Numbers 4 instructions are given to the sons of Kohath who were to carry the ark. They were warned to carry it by the staves, but they were not to touch it lest they die.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Samuel 6). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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