

“Faulty Worship”
2 Samuel 6:1-7
(Preached at Trinity, December 16, 2018)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. David has become the king over the entire house of Israel. He has defeated the Philistines and he has established his house in Jerusalem. David determined it was time to move the Ark of the Covenant into the holy city. David presumed to do this without being commanded by God to do so. But his motives were most likely pure.
2. David understood the significance of the Ark.

Although the Ark was an artistic display of beauty, the significance was not in this box of acacia wood covered with gold? These were common materials of the earth.

 - a. We often hear people today wondering what became of the Ark. There are fanciful speculations filled with intrigue. There have even been movies made portraying the mighty power of the Ark of the Covenant.
 - b. The significance of the Ark wasn’t with the materials or the beauty. It wasn’t a magical device that Israel could use to defeat her enemies. The significance of the Ark was what it represented. It represented the presence of the living God. The Ark was a symbol of the relationship between God and His people. That is why it was called “The Ark of the Covenant.”
3. David understood the significance of the Ark but failed to recognize the significance of the God it represented.

What is so special about this building we are occupying tonight? All around us are common materials we can find elsewhere. Bricks and mortar, carpet and wood. The materials are no different than you might find in a thousand buildings in our town, many of which are much more exquisite. The significance is this place has been designated as our place of worship.
4. David rightly understood that the worship of God must be a priority among His people. God could no longer be kept on the outskirts of Jerusalem but had to be in the midst of His people.
5. David and all Israel were rejoicing and worshipping God as the Ark made its way to Jerusalem from Kiriath-jearim. And then, all of a sudden, Uzzah is struck dead. This offends our sensibilities. Uzzah had the desire to glorify God. He was zealous that the Ark of God not be defiled by falling to the ground. Was his act a crime worthy of punishment, let alone death?
6. Human beings are notoriously guilty of disregarding the infinite holiness of God. Over the next several weeks as we examine this chapter I trust we will have a better understanding of God’s holiness. Tonight, I want us to examine the nature of worship. I title this sermon, “Faulty Worship.” Whatever positive spin we place upon this episode, God was not pleased.

Next week I’ll preach on the sin of irreverence.

- I. Mere numbers are no sign of God's favor
- A. David gathered 30,000 men for the occasion
1. These were the best and noblest men of Israel
 2. The great number was astounding
 - a. When Saul gathered his men in pursuit of David he mustered three thousand chosen men.
1 Samuel 24:2 NAU - "Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats."
 - b. David has gathered ten times that number
 3. David wanted this to be a significant occasion.
- B. Many presume today that the size of a church is an indication of God's blessings
1. We must never diminish the blessing of a large congregation. It is truly a blessing from the hand of God. The early church grew exponentially.
Acts 2:41-42 NAU - "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. ⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
Acts 4:4 NAU - "But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."
 2. But size is no guarantee of God's divine favor. There are plenty of large churches that have been built upon a human celebrity or upon carnal methods.
 3. Is it a church focused upon Christ? Regardless of the size of the church, Jesus Christ must be supreme. The holiness of God must be reflected in their worship.
- II. Good intentions are no substitute for God's revealed will
- A. David had the best of intentions
1. He gathered a multitude for the event
 2. He planned for music and a joyous procession
 3. It was an event designed to be remembered for generations. Fathers would tell their children of the Ark being brought into Jerusalem
 4. We should also notice the zeal of the people. They had left their homes, their wives and children—at their own expense. Their intentions to come before God were honorable.
- B. The new cart also seemed like a good idea
1. They provided what they thought was best.
 It was a new cart never used before, clean and free from the corruptions of use.
 2. Where did they get this idea? It wasn't revealed by God. It was the practice used by the Philistines over 50 years before. Rather than following the instructions of God for handling the Ark they followed the example of the pagan idolaters.

3. This procedure actually showed contempt for the Word of God. The best of intentions are spoiled if not done according to God's will. William Blaikie – "The best of services may be gone about in a faulty way. There may be some criminal neglect of God's will, like the dead fly in the apothecary's pot of ointment, causes the perfume to send forth a stinking savour."¹
- C. They failed on many fronts
1. The text said the sons of Abinadab led the way. But this was not their place. The Ark was under the jurisdiction of the Kohathites
 2. Second, it was exposed for all to see. God commanded the Ark to be covered. Mere, mortal eyes were not to gaze upon it as something common.
Numbers 4:5-6 NAU - "When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it; ⁶ and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over *it* a cloth of pure blue, and shall insert its poles."
 3. Third, it was placed on the new cart. But this also was not God's command. God didn't purpose that the Ark would be carried on a cart like a common piece of furniture. He commanded that it would be carried on the shoulders of Levites.
Exodus. 25:13-15 - "You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ "You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, to carry the ark with them. ¹⁵ "The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be removed from it."
Numbers 4:15 NAU - "When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy *objects* and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry *them*, so that they will not touch the holy *objects* and die. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry."
 - a. God's method displayed His holiness
 - b. The poles were designed so that no man would touch the Ark, for God is holy.
 - c. The Ark was to be carried by the priestly tribe, for God is holy
 - d. The poles were to never be removed. God's holiness was to never be violated.
 4. Their good intentions were not acceptable to God

¹ Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 2 Samuel*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books), page 87.

III. Religious zeal is also no substitute for obeying the Word of God

- A. The event was filled with music and rejoicing
2 Samuel 6:5 NAU - "David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the LORD with all kinds of *instruments made of fir wood*, and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets and cymbals."
1. One can only imagine the scene with thousands shouting and music filling the air.
 2. It was a display of corporate worship with singing and rejoicing. No one would have suspected that there was a great cloud of God's displeasure
 3. It reminds us of the great worship service when Israel made the golden calf.
Exodus. 32:17-19 NAU - "Now when Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp." ¹⁸ But he said, "It is not the sound of the cry of triumph, Nor is it the sound of the cry of defeat; But the sound of singing I hear." ¹⁹ It came about, as soon as Moses came near the camp, that he saw the calf and *the dancing*"
- B. The worship of God must be submissive – to obey Him in truth.
1. We must approach God with a mind to obey
 The very nature of worship is submission.
 The Hebrew word for worship is שָׁחָה shachah – it means to bow down or to prostrate yourself. It describes one coming in complete submission to God.
 2. Submission must dictate how we approach God in worship
 - a. One of the greatest errors being perpetuated today is that we have freedom to do anything that is not expressly forbidden.
 - b. God doesn't allow us to use our imaginations in how we order our worship
 3. This is why the regulative principle is so important. What is our standard for worship?
LBC 22:5 (Of Religious Worship and the Lord's Day) - "The light of nature shews that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; is just, good and doth good unto all; and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men, nor the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures."
LBC 22:5 - "The reading of the Scriptures, preaching, and hearing the Word of God, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord; as also the administration of baptism, and the Lord's supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear; moreover, solemn humiliation, with fastings, and thanksgivings, upon special occasions, ought to be used in an holy and religious manner."

4. Dale Ralph Davis – “The contemporary mood (*is*) that worship is actually a very individual affair, a matter of sheer personal preference, and – like our toothbrush – a very personal thing? To declare that faith, worship, and religion are rather regulated by royal revelation and subject to sovereign prescriptions sounds like a novel idea.”²
- C. Scripture is filled with examples of people who were judged of God because they presumed upon themselves to worship according to their own faculties of reason
1. King Saul decided to offer up a sacrifice because he thought Samuel would not arrive in time? The issue was not whether Samuel would arrive in time to make the offering – the issue was that King Saul was not qualified to make the sacrifice. When Samuel arrived he said to Saul, **1 Samuel 15:22 NAU** - "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams."
 2. Nadab and Abihu were killed by God because they presumed to offer that which God had not commanded. **Leviticus 10:1-2 NAU** - "Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD."
 3. If worship demands submission then it must begin with our willingness to submit our wills to God in how we conduct our worship

Conclusion:

1. Faulty worship does not mean the worshippers do not have the best of intentions. Uzzah had the best intentions when he reached out and laid his hand on the Ark. Faulty worship is worship that does not take into account the infinite holiness of God.
2. We have the privilege of worship. But how many Christians actually have an understanding of worship?
Verse 9 of Psalm 99 puts it in a proper perspective:
Psalm 99:9-1 KJV - "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy. "
 - A. The word for “Exalt” is **רָם** which means “to lift up.” True worship recognizing the greatness of God. It demands lifting Him high, recognizing His infinite greatness.
 - B. But the word for “Worship” is **שָׁחָה** which means “to bow down.” While God is exalted and lifted up, true worship demands that we bow low in holy reverence.
3. For many church members worship is simply a term to describe the weekly meetings where we gather and sing and listen to a sermon. But they don’t actually worship—God is not lifted up and they do not bow down. Their heart is not in it.

² Dale Ralph Davis, *Judge: Such a Great Salvation*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), pages 205-206.

4. God is not interested in our good intentions. He desires our heart. He desires our worship.
Isaiah 29:13 KJV - " Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me . . ."
5. David was convinced of his good intentions. He knew in his heart that the music and shouts of praise were pleasing to God. David was so convinced of the value of his good intentions he thought God's response was uncalled for and unfair. He became angry at God.
2 Samuel 6:8 NAU - "David became angry because of the LORD'S outburst against Uzzahh"
6. He thought God's actions were arbitrary and thus God couldn't be trusted.
2 Samuel 6:9 NAU - "So David was afraid of the LORD that day"
 - a. God's actions are never arbitrary. God is unchanging and His actions are always consistent with His divine nature.
 - b. God demands that His worship be consistent with His divine nature. God has not left us without a clear Word.
7. Most are convinced that their worship is proper and God is pleased. But too often the worship is judged more with what is pleasing to us than what God actually commands.
8. David learned from his sin and repented.
1 Chronicles 15:13-15 NAU - "Because you did not *carry it* at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance." ¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. ¹⁵ The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD."
9. There is one more important point to draw from this text as we consider worship. True worship must have the proper object in focus. For Israel it was the Ark. But in the New Covenant Jesus Christ is the Ark. He is the propitiation. He is the presence of God. Notice in **Verse 12** that Obed-edom was blessed as he possessed the Ark of God. Today, the blessings of God are upon those who have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ. He must be the focus of all things, and He must be treated as holy.