

ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS #11

“Bringing Back The Glory”

Introduction

Our nation is in a crisis. We need a national revival. We need to bring back the glory. But how does that happen? What does God’s word have to say about it?

I’m taking our text tonight from an Old Testament account of how even the great King David failed in his first attempt to restore the Ark of God’s glory to Israel. He made the same mistakes many American churches are making today.

I. Let Me Tell You A Story About Bringing Back The Glory

A. Historical Setting of 2 Samuel 6

1. The Ark of the Covenant, the center of Israel’s spiritual life and the actual dwelling place of the glory of God, had fallen into the hands of the Philistines.

2. David determined to bring it back to its proper place and sent a company of men to accomplish the task.

2 Samuel 6:1-2

Then David...gathered all the elite troops in Israel...to bring back the Ark of God...

3. David knew the importance of the Ark of God; it was the glory of God, the manifest presence of God among the people. He had a heart to bring back the glory. But then, unknowingly, they make a big mistake. Something that seemed so innocent at the time...

2 Sam 6:3

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.

2 Samuel 6:6

But 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.

4. Here we have one of those 'scary' verses in the Bible...

2 Samuel 6:7

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.

5. This is the only place in the Bible I know of where God Himself strikes a man dead! And for what? All he did was put his hand on the Ark! David himself didn't understand it...

2 Samuel 6:8-9

And David was displeased because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah; and he called the name of the place Perez 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?"

- a. David knew God; but He never knew God to act like this!
- b. He was afraid of God and lost hope he could bring back the glory.

2 Sam 6:9-10 The Message Bible

David became fearful of God that day and said, "This Chest is too hot to handle. How can I ever get it back to the City of David?" So he refused to take the Chest of God a step farther.

6. I wonder how many ministers have hit the wall the same way?

a. "Hey, God, all I'm trying to do is bring back your presence and glory; all I want is revival! Why aren't you blessing what I'm about? Why are you acting like this?"

7. David was discouraged; he was back where he started and the Ark was still out in the woods. Thank God the story doesn't end there.

B. Fast Forward 3 Months (From 2 Samuel 9 to 1 Chronicles 15)

1. David did what all true men of God need to do; he went back to the Word of God. When he re-read the scriptures he realized that God was not the problem; he found out *he was trying to do the right thing in a wrong way!*

2. He saw his sin was not *what* he was trying to do *but* how he was trying to do it. He thought God would be so pleased with *what* he was trying to do that God wouldn't care *how* he went about doing it. But it didn't work.

3. Then, when he went back to the Word of God, he saw that God had given very specific instructions about how the Ark was to be moved.

No New Carts!

The Ark was not to be touched. Poles were inserted into its rings so that the Priests could carry it on their shoulders.

4. Once David went back to the Word and repented of his presumption, he was ready to bring back the glory!

1 Chronicles 15:1

And David...prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched for it a tent.

a. Then he issued new instructions...

1 Chronicles 15:2

Then David said, 'None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him forever.'

b. Then he explained what went wrong the first time...

1 Chronicles 15:13

The anger of the Lord our God burst out against us because we failed to ask God how to move it properly...after the due order.

c. David learned it's not enough to have a good intention!

d. God not only tells us '*what*' we ought to do; He tells us '*how*' we ought to do it!

e. David's first failure was in the '*how*'; but now he's set for success.

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David had been alarmed when God struck down Uzzah. But in process of time he had considered the cause of his failure and set himself again to recover the Ark. But this time he was more cautious and careful about moving the Ark in the order God had given as agreeable to Himself.

1 Chron 15:14-15

So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the Lord God of Israel. And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord.

1 Chronicles 15:25-26

So David, the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord from the house of Obed-Edom with joy. And so it was, when God helped the Levites who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.

1 Chronicles 15:28

Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the horn, with trumpets and with cymbals, making music with stringed instruments and harps.

5. All ends well. David brings back the glory. But let's work our way back through the story and pull some prophetic principles from the narrative with 3 points:

**A good intention is not enough
Never put pragmatism before principle
Beware the novelty of 'new carts'**

II. A Prophetic Message For Those Who Want to Bring Back the Glory

A. First: A Good Intention Is Not Enough!

1. I believe many men of God, like David, want to bring back the glory and see revival. But many of those same men seem to have no regard for the biblical guidelines of how it is to be done.

2. Men say ‘the ends justify the means’; but not so with God!

Matthew Henry

It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well. It is not enough that we seek God--but we must seek Him after the due order. A good intention never justifies a bad action.”

Thomas Boston, Scottish Presbyterian Pastor

(1676-1732)

God is highly displeased with persons who are careful to perform duties but are not careful to perform them in a right manner. To perform religious duty is the easiest part of religion, but to do it in a right manner is very difficult; and few people have a heart to manage the difficulties of it.

3. A good intention is not enough; we must not only know WHAT God wants done but also HOW God wants us to do it.

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They had sought God in a way of their own notion, and not in that of the Divine appointment. They neglected to rigidly observe what God had prescribed in respect of the manner in which He would be sought – and it was this which had been so offensive to the Lord.

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Even if we have sincerity of purpose, we will fail if lack an exact conformity to the revealed will of God. We are bound to conclude that in our own day and generation, it is not our merely seeking God which will be crowned with any measure of success. It is seeking God in the right way, which is the way that God Himself has been pleased to reveal.

4. David failed in his first attempt to bring back the glory because he put pragmatism ahead of principle.

B. Never Put Pragmatism Ahead of Principle

1. What is ‘pragmatism’?

Pragmatism

Actions or policies dictated by immediate consequences rather than principles or dogma; more concerned with practical results than with principles; testing truth by what works.

- a. If it works, it's true; if it doesn't work it isn't.
- b. If it makes the church grow, it must be right.

2. Pragmatism has its proper place. Sometimes it just 'common sense'. But pragmatism is perilous when it becomes unbiblical. Some Pastors plan their policies around pragmatics instead of principle.

Pragmatic Pastors In Action

- **Everybody's so busy today; I need to shorten the services**
- **People are tired; let's shorten the worship so they don't stand so long**
- **Attention spans are short these days; I need to shorten my sermon**
- **I need to make sure that my sermons won't offend anyone**
- **I must always avoid sermons on all sensitive subjects**

a. The problem is that pragmatic pastors produce pantywaist Christians.

3. We water down the Word of God then wonder why the Church is weak.

"Sermonettes make Christianettes."

A.W. Tozer

4. During the 1980's many American mega-churches went to a 'seeker-friendly' service format as a means church growth.

- a. This is a perfect example on 'new cart' Christianity.
- b. The founders of the seeker-friendly movement had good intentions! They wanted to win the lost.
- c. Notice: I believe what these men wanted to do was right but how they went about it was wrong; you must not water down the Word of God out of sensitivity to sinners.
- d. The fallout from this error is with us today.

5. I personally believed that the church unwittingly paved the way for the political correctness mess in our culture.

a. Today we're told to be sensitive to using terms that might offend others; everyone knows how weird this has gotten.

b. But not many know that this all started in the American churches of the 1980's that first went 'woke' to the sensitivities of sinners.

c. Political correctness started in the Church! For example:

- Sermons about 'sin' went first-then sermons about repentance-and preaching about hell and eternal judgment are out of the question!
- Today you hardly ever hear a sermon on holiness or the fear of the Lord.

6. This is what happens when you put pragmatism ahead of principle. Finally...

C. Beware The Novelities of New Carts

1. David's new cart was a manmade invention; it was a manufactured vehicle designed to carry the weight of the Ark in the most practical way possible.

2. The new cart is a prophetic picture of how well-meaning men of God depart from the 'old paths' in the Word of God.

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Antiquity gains no reverence from us. The old poles with which our fathers did their work are considered out of date and useless, and we drag out our 'new cart' on every occasion we can. We start some fresh thing, invent some novelty, forgetting all the while that God's way is best.

3. New carts are not a new problem; David dealt with them as did our church fathers. Let me read from them.

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Lovers of novelty stop not to ask questions about propriety and pay no respect to the past. Just be extravagant and sensational, and you will gather a crowd.

Get rid of the old poles; 'new carts' are the fashion for this novelty-loving age. Let all the old-fashioned things rot. You must reform your plans, improve your methods, use your inventive genius and produce a 'new cart'.

Here is how some misguided men measure their work for God.

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Wouldn't it be a wonderful improvement on the old style of things to have a new cart? The new cart will harmonize with our new order. Pay no attention to that worn-out, obsolete plan of carrying the ark; we don't need the old polls if we have a new cart. It will save the shoulders of the Levites; it will be admired for its construction and commended for how well it rolls.

4. Testimony: 40 years of 'new carts' in Nashville. Where are they today?

a. The problem of trying to put the Ark on a new cart of your own creation is exposed when it arrives at the threshing floor; the oxen stumble; and the priests try to save it in their own strength.

2 Samuel 6:6

But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled. And Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the Ark of God. Then the Lord's anger was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him dead.

b. History repeats itself.

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Beware of the ruinous consequences of novelty in religion. Men set out with the new cart but soon disasters befall it on the road and another Uzzah is stricken dead. This put an end to the 'new cart' system with David. It taught him a lesson he never forgot. Never after that did he order another. He went back immediately to the forsaken poles. Let us keep to God's way in religion, and while the spirit of the age is clamorous for something new, let us stand by the old, and revere the ark.

(W. J. Hall.)

5. Before I move to close, I would like to address the question many have when they first hear this story...

D. Uzzah: The Elephant In The Room

1. The first thing many struggle with in this story is God's harshness toward Uzzah. Let's look at 2 quotes from our Puritan forefathers:

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It may be objected that the punishment was needlessly severe, because Uzzah's intentions were good. This is very plausible; but good intentions do not always justify wrong-doing. Many have been led astray in this. We may not do evil that good may come. God will not have His laws broken under pretense of serving Him.

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Some would say, "But how trifling the sin, compared with the severity of the punishment." Sin is never a trifle. Disobedience to God is not a trifle. Besides, the attention of the people had to be arrested, and the need for reverence emphasized. Hence the sin was not passed by and great benefit arose.

2. Many Bible scholars have pointed out that Uzzah committed the 'sin of familiarity'; he grew careless about how he handled holy things.

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Uzzah was a Levite, and he knew or ought to have known the commands of God with respect to the ark. In Num 4:15, it is written that those who had to bear the ark were "not to touch any holy thing, lest they die'. Yet constant familiarity with it may have led him to think of it as just a piece of furniture.

3. We know our God is a good God. Loving, merciful and gracious. We struggle with this verse because God Himself kills a man...a priest...trying to do a good work. What is the lesson???

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Uzzah died. How terrible! Yet what a warning for the ages! Being engaged in religious services or connected with sacred things cannot ensure salvation. We should, therefore, watch any tendency to levity or lightness in Divine worship, or in how we treat sacred subjects.

III. Close: Review

A. 3 Lessons to Be Learned By Those Who Would Bring Back The Glory

1. A good intention is not enough; God has a Word not only on *what* we are to do but how we are to do it.

- a. It is not enough to do the right thing; we must do the thing right!
- b. Many ministers are mad at God the wheels are coming off their 'new carts'.
- c. Wise ministers will repent!

Henry Matthew

Wise and good men may be guilty of an oversight, which, as soon as they are aware of, they will correct. David did not go about to justify what had been done amiss, nor to lay the blame on others, but owned himself guilty, along with others, of not seeking God in a due order.

2. We must never put pragmatism ahead of principle.

Charles Spurgeon

God's judgment of sin must differ exceedingly from ours. All changes from the written revelation of God are wrong. Whenever the practices of Christians differ from Scripture they are sure to incur inconvenience. One innovation against the Holy Word leads to another. A wrong thing done from right motives is not acceptable with God.

3. We must avoid the novelty of 'new carts'. Ask for the 'old paths'!

Closing Prayer

Title