

David, Part 7 1-2-22

Please Don't Touch

We are back to studying the life of David in I and II Samuel. We enter today into a new phase in David's life as we move into II Samuel, a book which we can divide into two parts. Chapters 1-10, David's triumphs and chapters 11-24 David's troubles. In chapter one we have the report of the death of Saul, David's nemesis and the first king of Israel. This is followed by David's lament over Saul and especially the passing of David's friend, Jonathan, who was the king's son. David does not gloat over Saul's demise, nor does he act to take any personal advantage respecting the vacancy on the throne of Israel. *2:1-4a Then it came about afterwards that David inquired of the Lord, saying, "Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" And the Lord said to him, "Go up." So David said, "Where shall I go up?" And He said, "To Hebron."* ²*So David went up there, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite.* ³*And David brought up his men who were with him, each with his household; and they lived in the cities of Hebron.* ⁴*Then the men of Judah came and there anointed David king over the house of Judah.*

So, David is here made king over the tribe of Judah, his own family's tribe. But, there were twelve tribes. What about the other eleven? *2:8-9 Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, had taken Ish-bosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim.* ⁹*He made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, even over all Israel.* So, the kingdom is temporarily split. Judah aligns with David, the rest with Ishbosheth. The first verse of chapter three makes a long story short. *3:1 Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; and David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.* And then the bottom dropped out on Ishbosheth when his chief general, Abner, got fed up with him and defected to David. The handwriting was already on the wall. In chapter four Ishbosheth is murdered by his own men and the expected occurred. *5:1-5 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh."* ²*Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the Lord said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'* ³*So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the Lord at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel.* ⁴*David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years.* ⁵*At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven*

years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah. Not a bad career. David would have been the cover-boy for Success magazine. He was the most successful and popular man in the history of Israel. But he arrived at the top of the ladder in a way that rebukes the ambitious man of the world.

Are you ambitious? Many years ago, I would have said, yes. My mother taught me to be ambitious and, by that, I mean she taught me to set my goals high and then work hard to reach them. If that is all ambition meant, it would be swell. But one of Webster's definitions for ambition is "an ardent desire for rank, fame or power." Now that spells trouble. Ambition, in the negative sense, is the craving for higher status that is rooted in selfishness and often leads to unloving actions designed to obtain the goal. Macbeth was ambitious. Hitler was ambitious. It is a lust for the top rung. David reached the top rung. Did he get there through ambition? No – And this is what makes him remarkable. David did not set his heart on being king. Never! We see not an ounce of ambition in the man. Doors swing wide open for him, inviting him to come and take the throne. But he does not seek it. What had to happen? The men of Judah come to him and ask him to be king. Then Ishbosheth dies and what does David do? March into his territory and say, "here I am!" No – all Israel comes to David. My readings in the history of our country indicate that this is kind of how George Washington landed in leadership. He didn't campaign, he was asked. Unfortunately, our system of elections invites into leadership many of our most selfishly overly-eager, ambitious persons. Listen, David obtained advancement in the right way. God exalted him. He did not plot and scheme to get ahead. He would not tear down those on the higher rungs. He is different. David obtained glory the same way Jesus did. Not by seeking it, but by seeking what? You've read his psalms – what did David seek? The favor of God through humble obedience. To David, becoming king was just a nice little extra. He said in Psalm 27:4 *One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to meditate in His temple.* The throne was not his goal. David sought first the kingdom of God and everything else was added to him.

One other thought on this – David was not ambitious to be king because he was content to serve God as a shepherd. Ambition is a child of discontent. People think, *if only I get that position, then I'll be happy.* They grab for the externals they think will bring joy. God-centered people have a source of joy within. David was a happy king only because he was a happy shepherd. Don't think a better position or

more money or a new house is going to turn life from a drag to a joy. Singles think, *I'll be happy if married*. Married folks think – well, they often see marriage as an obstacle to happiness, and think, *I'd be happy if I were married to someone better*. Truth is unhappy singles become unhappy marrieds. Unhappy poor people become unhappy rich people. Unhappy employees grow to be unhappy employers. David said, *The Lord is my shepherd, that's all I want*. Or something like that. Happy as a shepherd, serving the Lord. Happy as a king, serving the Lord.

Okay then, it is clear from what we have seen of David's story that things are going really very well for him. After he is king, they go really well for the entire nation. In chapter five, David takes Jerusalem and makes it his capitol. Then they win a great victory over those pesky Philistines. National morale is at an all-time high, the shekel is strong on international markets. David is on a roll. Then we come to 6:1-2 *Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.*²*And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God which is called by the Name, the very name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim.* Now, the ark of God or the ark of the covenant was a gold-covered wooden box containing the two tablets of the ten commandments, a pot of manna and Aaron's rod. This is the ark that sat in the inner room of the tabernacle. It served as the symbol of the presence of Yahweh. 3-5 *They placed the ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart.*⁴*So they brought it with the ark of God from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Ahio was walking ahead of the ark.*⁵*Meanwhile, 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.* I mean, this was a big day for the people of Israel. Celebration day! Party time! 6-8 *But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it.*⁷*And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God.*⁸*David became angry because of the Lord's outburst against Uzzah, and that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.* Well, isn't this just the kind of thing that earns God a bad reputation! I mean, what a party-pooper! And what a capricious, picky deity! Here Uzzah was trying to keep God's ark from getting dirty and God zaps him.

Is our Lord a capricious, picky deity? I hope you know better than that. Let's look behind the scenes of the Uzzah incident to see what we can figure out. We're told in verse 3 that the ark was placed on a new cart. In Numbers 4 we are told that the ark was to be carried by the sons of Kohat. Numbers 4:4-6 *This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things.*⁵*"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; ⁶and 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.* The ark was built with gold rings on the corners for the insertion of the poles. Numbers 4:15 (NLT) *The camp will be ready to move when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the sacred articles. The Kohathites will come and carry these things to the next destination. But they must not touch the sacred objects, or they will die.* God here clearly indicates what will happen if a human touches the ark. And what was that? He will die. Now, in 2 Samuel 6 we see that they carried the ark on an ox-cart, violating God's word. When it started to fall, Uzzah thoughtlessly grabbed it and *whammo*, he was dead – just as God had said.

So, how does David react? Just like you would. 8a *David became angry because of the Lord's outburst against Uzzah.* There are many things understandable, that are still not so good. David here has ignored God's law as had Uzzah. The promised punishment was delivered and David is mad? Maybe you have seen this kind of thing before. God gives clear instructions, with clear warnings. Then, the descendants of Adam and Eve disobey, suffer and, when they are eating the sorry fruit of their sin, they get angry with the Lord. With the Lord! Not their own disobedient selves – the Lord. God says poverty comes to the sluggard. You loaf around and you suffer loss. Don't blame God. God says to teach and discipline your children or else they will grow to be a pain for you. But you take a different approach to parenting and when you reap the consequences in your family you question God. God says to watch out how you handle intoxicants, but you think you know better, so you end up in trouble as a result. Don't blame God. In most cases, when you encounter a person who is angry with God, you are dealing with someone who is upset about experiencing the consequences of their own poor choices. And then they make their rebellion more thorough by shaking a fist at the Almighty whose gracious warnings they ignored.

Now, what was Uzzah's sin? What was David's sin? They did not carefully follow the law concerning the ark. They leaned on their own understanding. They

probably felt, *this is no big deal*. But, friends, when God speaks on an issue, the issue itself may not be big, but your response to God's voice is. Is he to be obeyed in whatever he commands? Andrew Bonar wrote: *It is not the importance of the thing but the majesty of the Lawgiver that is to be the standard of obedience*. Do you obey God when you think he's right? Or when you feel like it? Or, do you just obey God – period, operating in faith that your wise king knows better than you?

What happened to David here? David, the man careful to do God's word, what happened? May I suggest that things just got going so good for David, God's blessings were just all around him, so that he forgot something. Things were breaking their way and then David and his people got loose with the things of the Lord. They got a little too assuming of God's mercy. They forgot his holiness. That's what happened. In the midst of the party, they forgot that God is a consuming fire. And oh, how I'm convinced this happens with us. We just bathe in God's goodness and the tendency is to forget that our good and loving Abba Father is enthroned in holiness and awesome purity. When we forget that we may take liberties we best not take. God intervenes in the Uzzah incident and says, "Stop the party – it is time for a sobering lesson." What's the lesson? It's the same one taught in Leviticus 10:1 (ESV) *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them*. These young priests were ignoring God's instructions for worship. 2 *And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord*. This is a double Uzzah. Now, you can imagine how Aaron, God's priest, felt about what God did to his boys. Was he angry at God? Without a doubt. But Moses was there to speak to his brother. 3 *Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the Lord spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.'" So Aaron, therefore, kept silent.* 3b *By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy*. The Lord erased Aaron's sons to say this. He erased Uzzah to say this. He took out Ananias and Sapphira to say this. God is emphatic that we not forget his holiness.

He brought Israel's great party to a screeching halt. II Samuel 6:9-10 *So David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?"* 10 *And David was unwilling to move the ark of the Lord into the city of David with him; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite*. Celebration over. The lesson had to sink in. 11 *Thus 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. After three months, the party was to begin again. David got a do-over at Uzzah's expense. The ark was to come into the city – but this time all was done as God prescribed. The joy was just as great, but this time it was a holy joy, a reverent joy, a God-honoring joy. The lesson for us all – in the midst of God's blessing, in the enjoyment of his goodness, take care not to forget who is God. He is the holy king to whom we owe complete allegiance and total obedience.