

David, Part 8 1-9-22

David Before The Lord

Last time together we studied the first half of this chapter. We had seen that David was made king over all Israel in chapter five and then had won two great battles – over the Jebusites and the Philistines. Things were going great for David and Israel. Chapter six records the great celebration which occurred as they brought the ark of the covenant toward the new capital of Jerusalem and the sudden termination of the celebration when God struck down Uzzah for touching the holy ark. The party ended, David stuck the ark at the house of Obed-edom, still outside Jerusalem. So, we pick up here with this story of David and the ark 6:12-23

Now it was told King David, saying, “The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, on account of the ark of God.” David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. ¹³And so it was, that when the bearers of the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴And David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet. ¹⁶Then it happened as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷So they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. ¹⁸When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. ¹⁹Further, he distributed to all the people, to all the multitude of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed each to his house. ²⁰But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants’ maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!” ²¹So David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the Lord. ²²I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes, but with the maids of whom you have

spoken, with them I will be distinguished.” ²³*Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death*

What we have recorded in verses 20-22 is a marital spat. Some of us may be familiar with this form of dialogue. David and his first wife had a squabble and her it is recorded for the world. How would you spouses like that? Having your intimate quarrels transcribed and published, or posted on YouTube? That would make Facebook way more interesting wouldn't it? One positive is that you would have some record of who actually said what – that would be helpful. Well, here we get to listen in, like flies on the wall to an unpleasant exchange between David and Michal. David here descends from the clouds, cloud nine to be specific. His eyes sparkle with the newfound glory of the kingdom. It was a grand day for David and for Israel. And David, after presiding over the festivities as the king floats on home – it says to bless his household. We men like to do this – to drop in occasionally to bless our families with our presence. Ah yes, the home the one place where every man is king and the one place where every king is just a man. David descends from his prominent position, Michal meets him and, to say the least, she takes the wind out of his sails. She pops his balloon. 20cd *How the king of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself!*

What is this accusation? It seems to be something along the lines of indecent exposure. Was he guilty? It seems not. The text nowhere indicates that David did anything lewd. Probably what happened was that, in his dancing, the king exposed a little too much thigh. But Michal says *He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids*. Now, I'll let you in on something 16d (NLT) *When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she was filled with contempt for him*. And, you know, angry people tend to exaggerate and distort. But, what was Michal's beef? She probably felt like David's exuberance was just too undignified for a king. Being the king's daughter, Michal was a bit haughty and royally stuffy. And since married people feel that *my spouse's behavior reflects on me* she was angry. Why? Because David embarrassed her. Maybe she felt her high-society friends looked unfavorably upon exuberant David. She felt embarrassed and so attacked. After all, her father, when he was king, never went around leaping and dancing. He once prophesied in the nude but Michal only saw him behave in a stately manner. So, Michal was angry because David acted beneath his kingly dignity.

Now, something else behind Michal's anger is what often produces misunderstanding between those who love God and those who don't. She saw no reason for David to be so excited. Michal's problem was that she did not understand the religious emotion that so moved David, because presumably, she had none. She had no desire to leap, dance, pray or sing before the Lord and so she despised David when he did. For her part in this incident God closed her womb so she would have no child. Back in those days, that was considered a curse.

Now, we get to the heart of our study – David's response to Michal. He explains to Michal his celebrating spirit and behaviors. We will look at his explanation in two ways – why he celebrated and how he celebrated. Briefly then, point #1 – why David celebrated. He tells us what motivated him 21 *It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the Lord.* Why do I celebrate? Because God has chosen me, God has appointed me as king! Therefore, I will celebrate. He adds too, maybe with a bit of inappropriate spite, that he was chosen over Michal's daddy. But, basically, what moved David to celebrate before God was the reality of God's election. He's not celebrating because he had scratched and clawed his way to the top. He's praising God because the Lord had picked David out, pulled David up, and placed David down on the throne of his people. David takes no credit for this. He even says 22a *I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes.* It is his view that any esteem given to him rather than the Lord would be based on a falsehood. He could say with Paul, *I am what I am because of the grace of God.* And God's electing grace just blew David's mind. Look at 2 Samuel 7:18 *Then David the king went in and sat before the Lord, and he said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far?"* He is thrilled by the thought that God had sovereignly chosen him. How about that? And how about the fact that Scripture affirms for all believers that God has sovereignly chosen us to be his children? 2 Thessalonians 2:13 *We should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.* Let that sink in. God's gracious calling and election is grounds for never-ending thanksgiving. David said, *It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the Lord.* David did not opt to be one of the frozen chosen. Instead, he says, *I was chosen and so I will dance.* The truth moved him – literally.

And David thought this way too – he was elected king by God, not be the people, so who will he try to please while in office? Those who want a dignified king or the Lord who wants a humble servant? *I will celebrate before the Lord.*

So, that is the *why* of David's celebration, now let's turn to the *how*. I offer several sub-points but the point in general is this: David celebrated *before the Lord*. That is, he did it, consciously in the presence of God, with an eye towards pleasing God. He celebrated not before Michal. He didn't dance for her. He didn't dance for the people. He didn't do it as a photo op for the palace press corp. He danced and sang before the Lord. David had the mindset we could all use, of living his life before God, in his sight, performing for an audience of one. It's the truth of Proverbs 15:3 *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.* And, what a difference this concept can make in your life. When you are at work do you consciously do what you do for God? Before the Lord? Ephesians 6:5-8 (NLT) *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. ⁶Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. ⁷Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. ⁸Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.* Do your work before God, not the boss. And, if your boss is non-existent or away, are you laboring faithfully because the eye of the Lord of Lords is upon you? This faith position will alter your life and impact just so many aspects of our choices.

Once I heard a man on radio ask me to imagine what it would be like if Billy Graham were to come speak at our church. That would have been interesting in 1990, but far more so today. But, pick your celebrity if you like – what would it be like? For starters, everyone would be here, right? You might even be early. There would be a great sense of anticipation among us. Brooke would have his music well-chosen, his team prepared. John Holt would make sure the coffee was extra good and hot. Your singing would be much better and your attentiveness in prayer and in Scripture reading would be heightened because this Sunday you worship in the presence of the great Billy Graham. If Billy were out there listening you know I would be ready with a top-notch sermon. Well – is it not true that each Sunday we worship in the presence of the King of Kings? Worship, remember, is like a drama with an audience and performers. Now, who is who? Many church-goers think they are the audience and the religious professionals are the performers. But truly, in Christian worship, God is the audience, the congregation the performers, the

leaders get to fill the role of prompters. Essentially, we worship before and for the Lord, and if we come to understand this we would not be sloppy or lazy or careless in our worship. You wouldn't mumble your way, distracted, through a hymn because you worship before the Lord.

Now, this is just what David was doing in our story. Worship before the Lord is marked by three things which we find David doing as the ark comes into town. When you worship consciously and conscientiously before the Lord you will worship sacrificially. David, in verses 13, 17, 18 offered sacrifices, great sacrifices to the Lord. Now, worship is essentially a sacrifice and what can you offer that is too good for God? Too much for him?

Secondly, see that David worshiped before the Lord with vigor and enthusiasm. He put all he had into it. *14a David was dancing before the Lord with all his might.* Michal says, *why?* David says, *it was for the Lord.* And when you do something for the God who has saved you and chosen you to be his child you do so with all your might and all your vigor. You throw yourself into it, body mind and spirit. Is that what you do? Do you ever leave worship and feel expended and worn because you put into it all you had? Do you ever pray in private with vigor?

David's worship and any worship done before the Lord is sacrificial and vigorous. The third mark of worship before the Lord is that it is offered without concern for one's reputation or dignity. If David had sat and thought about how he might appear to others dancing and shouting he would not have done it. Michal says, "you made a fool of yourself before the people." David says, *that's okay because I made a worshiper of myself before God.* Michal says, *Consider what others thought.* David says, *Nope. It was before the Lord. I was considering what He thought.* David's attitude is that he will gladly be counted a fool if his foolishness brings glory to God. He didn't care what the people thought of him – just so they saw that God was worthy to be exalted. And, we need this kind of freedom from self and freedom to worship. To the extent that you care for your own honor, to that extent you care not for the honor of God. But it's this concern for how I look that keeps us from witnessing for Jesus and from praising God. *Oh, I'm afraid they will think I am a fanatic. So I don't speak for Christ. I'm careful not to sing too loud or too exuberantly.* We are sick with the disease of self-concern.

Oh, how God has applied this to my own heart and life, especially since I am placed as a leader in public worship. I want so much not to care what people are thinking of me as I preach but to care only for God's evaluation. Often, I find myself fearful for self when I lead singing. What if I hit the wrong note? I'm no great singer

– what if someone laughs at me? God has spoken to me through this story of David and said, *Forget about that*. There will be times when I am thought silly or sloppy for Christ's sake. So be it. Maybe I'll be thought ignorant or arrogant for Christ's sake. So be it. David says 22a *I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes*.

I had a professor in seminary who articulated what many apparently believe. He spoke of a need for pastors to maintain what he called the ministerial dignity. Ministerial dignity. Paul forgot to mention this to Timothy. I prefer what John Piper wrote in an article he entitled, *Brothers, we are not professionals*. I quote: *Pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the ministry. The mentality of the professional is not the mentality of the prophet. Professionalism has nothing to do with the essence and heart of the Christian ministry. The more professional we are the more spiritual death we leave in our wake. For there is no professional childlikeness, no professional tenderheartedness, no professional panting after God. But, our first business is to pant after God in prayer. Our business is to weep over our sins. Is there professional weeping? Our business is to strain forward to the holiness of Christ and the prize of the upward call of God; to pummel our bodies and subdue them lest we be cast away; to take hold of the blood-spattered cross and deny ourselves. How do you carry a cross professionally? ...We are to be God-besotted lovers of Christ. How can you be drunk with Jesus professionally? ...There is an infinite distance between the pastor whose heart is set on being a professional and the pastor whose heart is set on being the aroma of Christ, the fragrance of death to some and eternal life to others.*

I could put the word “dignified” in where Piper puts “professional.” The point is that God-honoring living and God-honoring worship may sometimes be undignified. Before the Lord there is no concern for reputation and dignity. Before the Lord men fall on their faces. The harlot with Jesus wasn't dignified when she wept over the Lord's feet. The disciples, after the resurrection, fell at His feet and worshipped. John in Revelation fell at His feet with trembling. How undignified! Friends, don't heed the Michal's. Pay no attention to them. Don't try to please the folks who are too cool to really bless God. Hey, it is okay to be excited about the Lord. So, come into church committed to blessing the Lord with all that is in you. Don't worry if that person next to you thinks you sing too loudly. David shouted. Don't worry if someone thinks you are showing off when you tell of what God has done for you or is doing with you. Don't worry if you are not as articulate as certain

others when you speak your blessing or tell of God's goodness. Worship before the Lord is indifferent to reputation or dignity.

I think David intentionally looked for ways to appear lowly or unsophisticated. He expressed in verse 22 a concern of his heart. 22a *I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes.* He could say with John the Baptist, *he must increase, but I must decrease.* Rather than maintain his dignity, David wanted to maintain his humility. And, as a thirty-year-old victorious, popular king there was much happening that could demolish any humility he had. His people were telling him he was great. Other kings were telling him he was great. Proverbs 27:21 (NLT) *Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised.* Success is a trial. You've often heard the saying that power corrupts. When you meet a powerful humble person – give thanks. That is a hard combo to maintain. I heard a Christian musical artist share how hard it was for her to come home after doing a concert tour. On tour she was applauded, and asked for autographs, but when she came home her husband expected her to clean up the cat's mess and wash the clothes. She spoke of the temptation to convince yourself that you are above such duties. Well, our man David was lauded and feared. He was made king by God and then by the people, but it seems, at this point in his life, he consciously sought humility and feared growing proud. Wise tactic. Pride goes before a fall. Before honor comes humility. Would you commit yourself now, as David did, to glorify God however it makes you look and to be forever humble in your own eyes. This is far from natural, so we commit ourselves with prayer and with an eye toward the provision of God's Spirit. Let's pray for that now.