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## PREFACE

When I first heard the song I was appalled. It was beautifully done. The music was great; the singer was the talented Frank Sinatra; but the lyrics were terribly earthy and carnal. The song was "My Way," written especially for Frank Sinatra. It describes a life lived entirely as Mr. Sinatra indeed lived his life, "My way." In the song the singer is looking back at his life, and claiming great achievement because of his egocentric, self-centered, and self-indulgent way, which is summed up as having been so successful because he did it "My way."

But I submit that the life that is really great is the Christian life which is lived not "My way," but "God's way." That way is the successful way of the Word. It is the life lived out through a continual seeking of God's will in His Word through prayer, in order that His way might be followed. The song of victory for the Christian in glory will have as its continual lyric, "I did it His way."

May God grant to us, His children who are fixed upon honoring and glorifying Him, a correct acknowledgement of and submission to "His way." To that end is this brief consideration of His Word dedicated. Amen.

## HONEST PRAYER—CHAPTER VI

### HONEST GUIDANCE THROUGH HONEST PRAYER

*II Samuel 5:17-6:15*

*But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.*

*The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?*

*And the LORD said unto David, Go up; for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.*

*And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim.*

*And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.*

*And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.*

*And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.*

*And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.*

*And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.*

*II Samuel 5:17-25*

Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim.

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was at Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, how shall the ark of the LORD come to me?

So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obedom the Gittite.

And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obedom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obedom, and all his household.

And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obedom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark

*of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness.*

*And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.*

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.*

*So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.*

*II Samuel 6:1-15*

Mistakes and losses in the Lord's work are multiplied and accented when we have not sought God's mind in His Word through prayer. The Word and prayer go together, the one with the other actually leading to the other. By that we mean that meditation in the Word will invariably inspire spiritual prayer, and that spiritual prayer will always point one to the Word. Prayer, then, is an important experience for the faithful execution of the Lord's work. It will enable the Christian to ascertain God's will and way and Word. Through the intuitive powers of prayer and through the added insight into the Word that prayer brings, prayer will lead to the devoted service that the Lord desires and deserves.

Our text serves as an example of the power of prayer for discerning the will, way, and the Word of God. In it, David is confronted with three major and very noble decisions. He has three noble projects in mind. The first two have to do with engaging the enemy of God; the last has to do with engaging the ark of God as the center of worship for the people of God, a position which it ought to have had. In the first two of these tasks, David sought the Lord through prayer, but in the last he failed at prayer and so failed to accomplish his proper and noble purpose, until he had been corrected through his own honest prayers. Basically, the major difference between success and failure was prayer, or the lack of it. Failure at prayer led to the other failings in our text. From these incidents we learn much about the will, the way, and the Word of

God, and that to discover them in any and every circumstance, one must engage in real and spiritual prayer—in honest prayer.

David had just been anointed king over all the tribes of Israel (*II Samuel 5:1-5*), having before been king only over Judah for the previous seven years (*II Samuel 2:1-4*). The Lord will now test David by allowing Satan to stir up the enemies of Israel to attack David's new kingdom of a united Israel. This will be a test for the new king and his reign over such a large people. The question will be raised and answered: Will David be like Saul, one who always forgot to consult the Lord, or will he be wise in prayer and in obedience to the will and way and Word of the Lord? Our text serves to answer this question.

Our study will reveal how prayer can enlighten every Christian. Through prayer we all can know the will and way and Word of God for our lives and for our means of service to Christ. But without prayer we will be in danger of missing the will and way and Word of Christ. Our exposition will follow those heads:

First, **Prayer enlightens Christians to the Will of God.**

Second, **Prayer enlightens Christians to the Way of God.**

Third, **Prayer enlightens Christians to the Word of God.**

## PRAYER ENLIGHTENS CHRISTIANS TO THE WILL OF GOD

*II Samuel 5:17-21*

*But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.*

*The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.*

*And David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up; for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.*

*And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim.*

*And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.*

*II Samuel 5:17-21*

The enemies of Israel and of God had been relatively quiet up until this time of David's reign as king. During the years of civil war between the house of Saul and David, they had been content with the turmoil within Israel, that it would end in a weakened nation, more vulnerable and susceptible to their advances and attacks. However, when they realized that now the kingdom had rallied around David and had unified into a stronger unit, they moved quickly against David's rule before his government was fully established.

How like the Devil to attack according to our times of beginnings and of weakness! He is as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour (*I Peter 5:8*). The Adversary moves quickly to take advantage of our vulnerabilities. But, as with David, we must use our powerful resource of prayer at the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace in the time of need (*Hebrews 4:16*). God has always a way to escape that we may be able to bear his

assaults (*I Cor. 10:13*). In the case of David, God had a plan for him actually to win the victory over the Devil's forces in the Philistines, but it had to be determined just what was the will of God in this confrontation with the enemy. David wisely sought God's will in this matter, because if God be not with his armies, then his newly established kingdom would be irreparably harmed in its very survival. How important for prayer to be engaged when attempting work for God! How important is prayer when attacked by the enemies of our souls. God has always a perfect will for our protection and even victory, but without prayer neither will be ours. David needed to know if it was God's will to go against the enemy "head on," so to speak.

For many of God's children, no time in prayer would have been taken before the throne of God. Some would reason. "Why, it is always time to face off with the enemies of God." Without prayer they would attempt to defeat a formidable foe, whom God would not have them engage at that time.

Throughout the Bible there have been times of "waiting upon the Lord," for His times, for His schedule, for His plan to be known. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter had to be restrained from thwarting the great redemption of the cross (*John 18:10-11*). It was only as Peter heard from Christ that he could wait for a then yet future day for standing strong for his Lord (*Acts 2:14; 4:8-13, 19*). But there in the Garden at that time and place, Peter and the others had to wait the Lord's time for standing against the enemies of the Lord. David had learned this great truth concerning the ways of God. His many years of running from Saul, and of waiting for a future day for victory had served him well to teach him to wait upon the Lord.

*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall;*

*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

*Isaiah 40:30-31*



David knew to wait upon the Lord in prayer to determine His perfect will in this matter of confronting the Philistines, and in so doing, and at the same time, and through the same medium of prayer, he also appropriated the power of the Lord to effect the victory according to the will of God.

### The Word through Prayer

David had also the distinct pleasure of operating within the authority of the Word of God. When he had sought the Lord's will in this matter, immediately God spoke His pure Word back to him, *Go up; for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand (v.19)*. How blessedly powerful are we when we have fresh from heaven God's inspiring Word as our resource. David's faith would be mighty and unswerving in its resolve. Now he knew within his very soul and spirit that the battle was Israel's because God's voice of sure authority was still ringing in his ears. This blessed experience of going forth in the power of the Word of God and with the unshakable assurance of victory was David's only because he had sought the will of God through prayer. Prayer had been the means of operating within the authority of the Word of God. The Word and prayer stand together, or else failure and defeat await those hasty souls who would venture forth into the battle of the Lord without either. For David the Word came to him through prayer, and it will come to us in the same way as well. We cannot know the will of God in any matter without both.

### A Sweeping Victory

David named the place of this great victory, Baal-perazim, "The plain of breaches," because *The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters (v.20)*. This victory had been so sweeping that it resembled the sweeping power of flooding waters to remove all in its path. So devastating had been Israel's armies by the power of the Lord, that they had left their images or household gods behind. The precipitancy of their flight before David's forces, and the suddenness with which the Israelites

burst upon them was like a *breach of waters* (Cook). This is ever the plight of the enemies of God when approached in the power of the Word through prayer.

*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*Draw near to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded.*

*Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

*James 4:6-10*

PRAYER ENLIGHTENS CHRISTIANS  
TO THE WAYS OF GOD,  
*II Samuel 5:22-25*

*And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.*

*And when David inquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees.*

*And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines.*

*And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.*

*II Samuel 5:22-25*

Fresh Prayer Needed

Again the Philistines came against David as before, in fact, they returned to the very same place as before, Rephaim. David could have attempted to rest upon his former prayers. He could have reasoned thusly: "It is the same enemy. It is the same place. It will be the same battle with the same strategy and plan and power and victory." But God does not operate like that, and David had learned that while walking with Him during the difficult and trying years of Saul's persecution. David had learned to wait upon Him in honest prayer. David knew that he could not rest on any former Word or prayer, but must have fresh and new insight, power, and refreshment, for each confrontation with the enemies of God. Surely, he sang a Psalm similar to the following:

When wilt thou learn O sinful man,  
the former battle gained;  
That now in skirmish fought anew,  
to turn to Him again.

Each battle fought for thee, Dear Lord,  
must always be waged with thee;  
No matter what the former gain,  
or how great its victory.

So, once when I've gained a victory,  
through strength sought at thy hand;  
I must return to thy pierced feet,  
if the next to win I can.

Those words, *And when David inquired of the LORD*, are of extreme importance in the battles of the Lord. There can be no dependence upon former battles or experiences as if God had some kind of a "ditto" button for convenience sake. He must be continuously sought for and waited upon if the power is to be the energetic and fresh potency from God's glorious Person. God delights in the innovative and, to us, sometimes novel. He walks and works and deals in the ways of newness, lest it be said that He is somehow limited or common. But David had learned that truth about his God and understood that God is a God of variety, and He would have us all to remember that in all our expectations of Him.

### **Fresh Strategy Required**

There was no reason for a change in David's approach to these same enemies in the same place in the same confrontation except that God willed a different way. This is always God's prerogative: He chooses to do things His way. After all, this was His army, His people, His enemies, His battle. He wills things just because He wills things. He is a Person with His own reasons for doing things as He chooses. It is His absolute right as God and Sovereign to do just as He pleases without explaining anything to anyone. And David knew and accepted this. Unlike many folks today who feel that God must always have a revealed reason for doing anything, David sought to find out from God Himself just what would be His particular way in this new confrontation with the enemies, even though all things appeared to be the same as in the just previously fought and won campaign. David

was a man after the heart of God because he had learned this great truth of life in God's universe:

**Whosoever will let God be God, whosoever will acquiesce to the will of the God Who is truly God and Sovereign in all things both large and small, and patterns his actions and life accordingly, will meet with the applause and approval of God.**

This is not to suggest that any creature could keep God from or hinder God in any way from doing all His will. But it does mean that to be pleasing to Him, one must recognize and acknowledge and acquiesce in His absolute and final sovereignty as God to do exactly as pleases Him for His own personal reasons.

*Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,*

*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* *Isaiah 46:9-10*

In this battle God had a completely different plan. In the former campaign, David's forces met the Philistines head on in a frontal attack, but now He instructs the enemy be approached from the rear. They were to *compass*, or go around them, and come against them from just the opposite side as in the former battle (v.23). The mulberry trees were to be their landmark by which they were to judge both where and when to engage their enemies (vs. 23-24). It was when they would hear *the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself* [lit.'sharpen,' or become active to engage your forces] ; *for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines*. They were to listen for the noise<sup>2</sup> of the wind in the tops of the mulberry trees as their signal to attack the Philistines.

<sup>2</sup> Lit. *tsadah*, "to step, to go on slowly" [Gesenius], i.e. stately marching. The wd. means the sound produced by human steps (*I Kings 14:6; II Kings 6:32*), employed as the symbol of the approach of the Lord here and *Judges 5:4; Ps. 68:7*. The Heb. wd. signifies the majestic stepping of God. The *sound* of a "marching" from the tops of the trees was as if the branches were being moved by a strong wind, but the wind was not blowing, i.e. God was moving ahead of David's army as plainly stated in the verse.

This peculiar way of the Lord was only learned through prayer. What if David had failed to pray? Would he have been aware of God's unique agenda and strategy for this battle? Quite obviously he would not have had the Lord with his armies' offensive if he had not spent time in prayer.

Is not all our lives somewhat similar? Could any one of us suggest that God could or should be presumed upon in any effort for Him? And not only in efforts for Him, but in our every day living, there are countless possibilities in our ways. But only His way will prove profitable; therefore we must spend time in prayer if we would learn his unique ways in our several decisions in every day life. As David, we will find that even in repetitious circumstances God will have a fresh approach to them. Prayer in every day life will make all events fresh and exciting, and will match verbatim with His ways. This will work splendid blessedness in a Spirit-filled walk with Him, and victories over our supreme enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. As with David, there will come spiritual enlightenment pertaining to the ways of God when we engage in real and spiritual—honest—prayer. Our lives and our ways will then agree with His life and way, bringing love, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER ENLIGHTENS CHRISTIANS  
TO THE WORD OF GOD,  
*II Samuel 6:1-15*

*Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.*

*And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim. II Samuel 6:1-2*

A Noble Cause Without Prayer

The word, *Again*, is the key to relating this incident with the last two in the previous chapter. The story is the continuing saga of the new king's activities with his special *thirty thousand chosen men*. This word, *Again*, marks this story as the follow-up to the two previous ones in Chapter Five. However, there is one glaring distinction: David had not sought the mind of God through prayer. The chronicler recorded David's words of confession, *We sought him not after the due order (I Chronicles 15:13)*. In other words, David did not seek God's will or way in this movement of the ark of God to Zion. He forgot to pray.

The ark had not been the center of worship in Israel for over 120 years. It had been in the possession of the Philistines for 70 of those years, and had been sort of hidden in Kerjathjearim (Lit. "the village of the woods," *I Samuel 7:1-2*) for another 50 years, up until the anointing of David as king over all the tribes of Israel (*II Samuel 5:1-5*). But upon his anointing as king over all Israel, David immediately sought to establish the ark of the covenant as the central place of worship for all Israel. "His first act as a sovereign related to the interests of religion, and the ark being then the grand instrument of it, he took the opportunity of the official representatives of the nation being with him, to consult them about the propriety of establishing it in a more public and accessible locality" (Jamieson on *I Chronicles 13:1-4*). Having just taken Jerusalem (*II Samuel 5:6-10*),

he purposed to establish *the ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubim, whose name is called on it (I Chronicles 14:6)* in what would become the city of David. It was there that God would build His Temple to house the ark, and it was there that God would crucify His only begotten Son, Whose work on the cross was pictured in the ritual concerning the ark.

What a noble purpose David had. It was a grand work, this movement of the ark of God in order to emphasize the blood of Jesus in the ritual associated with the ark and its covering mercy seat. David had resolved to establish a place where Jehovah's worship could be celebrated, a house where the symbol of His presence should be fixed and communion with His people be established on the basis of the blood. He sought to honor God by establishing the ark as the center of worship in all Israel once again. It was there that God said that He would meet with the people, and it was there that God said that He dwelt among His people. But God has a perfect way, will, and Word in the worship of Himself by His people. And that perfect way and will is revealed to men in His Word through prayer. David did not seek the Word of God through prayer, but instead consulted with captains of thousands and hundreds—with mere men (*I Chronicles 13:1-3*). His failure to seek God's Word through prayer concerning the movement of the ark will prove the ruin of David's noble purpose and cost the life of one of God's servants—all because David attempted to do it "My way."

### "My Way" to Serve God,

*And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was at Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.*

*And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.*

*And David and all the house of Israel played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.*

*II Samuel 6:3-5*



David had just previously sought the will of the Lord with complete success. He had sought God's will in a matter not particularly expressed in God's

Word, the particular details of approaching the enemies of God in battle. In other words, "How shall I fight them?" The Word was silent concerning that particular campaign; therefore David had sought the will and way of God through prayer. But now, this moving of the ark is entirely another kind of matter. God's Word expressly detailed how the ark was to be moved, but David neither heeded its instruction, nor regarded God's ordained way in attempting to achieve his noble and high purpose.

Without having sought the Lord through prayer, David was attempting to do a noble and good work man's way, and in so doing, he was guilty of sin. David failed to discern the mind of God, which mind had been revealed in the law. Had he sought the Lord in prayer, he would have been directed to the Word of God and His way to move the ark. But as the tendency is among sinful men, David failed at prayer, and therefore he failed at his service. Through continued honest prayer, God would have directed David and the people to the Book of Numbers:

*And when the camp settest forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering veil, and cover the ark of testimony with it;*

*And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof.*

*Numbers 4:5-6*

*But unto the sons of Korah he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.*

*Numbers 7:9*

Had David sought the Lord's Word through prayer he would have found three essentials for moving the ark of the covenant. (1) It was to be always covered—**unseen**. (2) It was to be moved only by using wood staves that were placed through the rings made in it—**untouched**. And (3) it was to be borne up on the shoulders of only the sons of Korah—**unequaled**. God had detailed instructions in His Word for moving the ark. It had to be done this precise way. God has a meticulous way to do all things, and they must be done His way according to His Word or become unacceptable in His sight. This is called in the Bible, obedience.

The way to find God's way and will in any matter is to seek for the truth through honest prayer, and if the way and will of God is not in the Word, then the answer will come either through the Spirit's promptings or through Providence's openings. Or if it has been specifically dealt with in His Word, then God will lead the honest supplicant into His honest Word on that particular subject. The way and will of God will become known from His Word through prayer. Only then will obedience be possible.

David sought to do God's work the world's way. When the Philistines had captured the ark, they returned it on a new cart (*I Samuel 6:7-12*), just the same way as David now sought to move it. It worked for the world, but it could not work for the people of God. God requires obedience from His people, and rightfully so. They are the ones that know His grace and love; the world knows nothing of either. Besides, God expects little from the wicked world as it meddles in His work. He can accept none of it, but His people can indeed offer up spiritual sacrifices of honorable efforts for His glory; therefore all things done by His people for His honor and glory must be done His way, or else it will be met with *confusion and every evil work*.

### Ignoble Results Without Prayer

*And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.*

*And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.*

*And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.*

*And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, how shall the ark of the LORD come to me?*

*So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite.*

*And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months; and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household.*      *II Samuel 6:6-11*

The ark was to be unseen, untouched, and unequalled when moved. But David had failed to observe these requirements of God's law. When the ark was about to fall, Uzzah sought to protect it by reaching out to steady it. God immediately killed him for defiling His Word, even though it was a good thing that he attempted to do. David's as well as Uzzah's desire was holy, noble, and pure, but they both went about it in the wrong way with dire consequences.

"Let's do the work of God with our own rationale, our own ideas. Let's use our business acumen, worldly philosophy, and worldly wisdom. We need to apprehend some of the world's own techniques, then watch us grow." Or, "Let's do the work of God by following the example of others. That church does it; it must be okay." But we must remember Paul's words, and to what they apply: *It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (I Cor. 4:2). But faithful to what? What else except the Word of God?

Faithfulness means doing the work of God in the way He has prescribed. Expediency has no proper place in the church. Compromise must be rejected and practicability over the creedal Word must not be even considered, lest we lose all and become Uzzahs. Many today are desirous to do good, but have no proper concern for God's standard—they study not His Word diligently to discover what laws, rules, and principles are therein to govern and to regulate the bearing of the ark of the gospel. *If ye love me keep my commandments (John 14:15)*. *Keep* means to “treasure, guard, preserve.” How are we to treasure that of which we are ignorant? True love for Christ must flow in the appointed channels, and be directed by the Divine precepts, or it is not love at all. *God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)*. *Truth* means according to the Word (*John 17:17*), and that *truth* is only discerned through a prayerful approach to it. If truth is absent from a supposed love, then there is no love at all. David's love for Jehovah was void of truth in this incident; therefore it was not real love at all. Truth must guard over and confine expressions of love within certain perimeters. Efforts for God are to be controlled or else they become nothing but fleshly enterprises of sentimentalism, wholly unacceptable to God.

Failure at prayer was the root of David's difficulties in this happening. He failed to discern the mind of God in His Word, which could have been his through prayer. As a result one man lost his life, and David suffered personally in spiritual loss. *Verse 8* records David as being *displeased*. The word in the Hebrew means “to be angry.” He seems actually to have become mad at God. Lack of prayer will lead to such foolishness as this! Once one gets out of communion with God, and the losses begin to be felt, then the fleshly anger aims itself at the one Person deserving of no anger. According to *verse 9* David was filled with confusion and distrust of God also.

*And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said,  
How shall the ark of the LORD come to me? II Samuel 6:9*

How like the man who forgets to pray! The *sound mind* which the Word promises (*II Timothy 1:7*) is missing in those who lose prayer. David was filled with fear, panic, and dread because of his thoughts of God. This is the man who was already the *sweet psalmist of Israel*, but prayerlessness ruins sweetness and embitters the heart toward God. *Verse 10* records David's removal of the ark to Obededom's house. This meant for David a great loss of communion and joy with God. This ark was where God did indeed manifest His presence with His people. But David's failure at prayer meant that his fellowship would now suffer loss. Prayer brings joy into the soul because His presence is known and enjoyed through those times of sweetest companionship. David lost blessings of many different kinds, because *verse 11* says that "the LORD blessed Obededom and, all his household" because of the presence of the ark in his house. Prayer and His presence brings blessing of all kinds. But David missed out on these blessings associated with the ark of God because his whole demeanor was out of sorts with his God, and it all began with a failure at prayer.

### **The Means (God's Way) Justifies the End**

No doubt, to some this way of God will seem unfair. Surely someone will say, "David was seeking to do a noble thing, a thing pleasing to God, a thing which was in God's purpose and plan of the ages; therefore God should have blessed it in spite of the error of the ark's movement." Oh no! the end of our labors for God does not ever justify the means, for God receives glory equally from both. And His righteousness and justice require perfection in both the means and the end in view. Another question: "Why do believers in Divine Sovereignty live and do things more in keeping with the precise scriptural patterns?" Answer: They see that since God is always in control, they need

never fear that they will expose Him to loss or damage, or that His work will suffer any loss or fail to experience any gain, if they limit themselves to serving Him in the way that He has appointed in His Word. This is otherwise known as faith, real faith in God and in His will and way and Word.

Truly the means will justify the end, because the means can and will be overruled by God's ordained and good end. Suppose that Uzzah had thought: "I cannot touch that ark because it is altogether holy unto the Lord; the law forbids it." So, he let it fall. Would he have been right or wrong in so doing? He would have been right to have trusted God to do what he could not obediently have done himself. God's great work and God's great truth are not upheld and promoted by any of man's infidelities—whether large or small in man's sight. God delights not in any unrighteous work to promote His. He receives no glory from any unrighteous acts, no matter what the motive, or even the end human result of them. But God does indeed do His righteous work as He has ordained in His Word. Therefore, in order to glorify God which is the whole duty of man, we must believe in God—in His Sovereignty, His Government, His Almighty control, in all things—and only that belief will result in using only glorifying means which are in accord with God's ordained ways. God's great ordained ends will never suffer loss when we obey His similarly great ordained means to effect them.

### God's Use of Man's Disobedience (Wrath)

*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of  
wrath shalt thou restrain.* *Psalms 76:10*

When one does things outside the pale and prescription of God's order and governmental laws, the use that God makes of those efforts fall into the category of man's wrath, or sin; but God does indeed use our mistakes, errors, blunders, and failures to effect His final great ordained end. His wisdom applies the foolishness of men to gain His own great objective in Christ. The Book of Judges is the history of

God using the blundering weaknesses of human misfits to rule His own people. This is glorifying to God, but is not the best way of God. The whole history in the Bible is full of examples of God using man's *wrath* (sin) to work the final *praise* (glory) of God in the end of all things (q.v. *Eph. 1:11-12*). From the very beginning God has used man's wrath to effect His own great end. The Serpent was allowed to bring into existence man's wrath in order to necessitate the work of Jesus Christ; that wrath will in the end bring praise to God. Even Judas Iscariot's betrayal (God's supreme confrontation with man's *wrath*) was the vehicle used by God to bring about the death of His Son in order to save sinners, whose salvation is the ultimate praise and glory of God. God indeed uses the most corrupt of events, circumstances, even sins, to His own glory, but in no way by His use made of them does He endorse those actions. All men are fully accountable, not according to God's use made of their actions or methods, but for the way, manner, and integrity of those actions.

But some judge the worth or righteousness of their actions and methods by the use which God makes of them. The question raised by Paul, *Let us do evil, that good may come?* (*Romans 3:8*) demands an unqualified, No! The supreme blessedness is to be found doing things according to God's ways and thoughts. This brings blessedness and reward to the doer, while the other results in fear, confusion, and every evil work—finally death. God is most pleased with and blessedly glorified in His peoples' obedience as they believe in His will and way and Word. They venerate Him when they do everything according to His prescribed and ordained way, and quite resolutely leave the end up to the Sovereign Ruler of the Existence.

### God's Use of Man's Obedience,

*And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness.*

*And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.*

*And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.*

*So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.*

*II Samuel 6:12-15*

David realized the death of Uzzah was not caused by the ark. He, through honest prayer, came to realize that the ark was the source of blessing for the house of Obededom. It was certainly not from Obededom's stature or from Uzzah's obscurity that determined either blessings or curses from God as regarded the ark. God is no respecter of persons, but David had found God's mind through prayer.

*And [David] said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.*

*For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. [added emph.]* *I Chronicles 15:12-13*

The words, *we sought him not after the due order*, refer to both prayer and the Word. David acknowledged his and the peoples' error, repented through prayer, and found the Word of God in this matter of moving His ark. Then, the blessings and love and joy and peace were David's and the peoples'. Through David's careful consideration of the circumstances of his former attempt to move the ark, and through the seeking Him *after the due order*, he came to the corrected way of God. When the winds of Providence go against us, we need to survey our course and in prayer weigh it against the instructions of the Word of God. Real happiness and joy in Christ is to be found doing all things according to God's ways and thoughts. Prayer will bring blessedness and reward in God work, while prayerlessness will bring shame and loss.



## God's Way

God has strong feelings about man's service for Him. He counts the slacking, disregarding, and discounting of His will, way, and Word as the greatest of sins, even deserving immediate death as in the case of Uzzah. However, today God's anger is somewhat subdued through the atonement of Jesus in glory at His throne. Therefore, churches today can use the most ungodly ways to attempt to bear the gospel of Christ, and do it without evident penalty. Many mega-congregations are patent testimonials to the power of the flesh to amass large groups of worldly people, who suppose that they are worshipping and serving God. But as Uzzah discovered in this life, their builders will see it all fired under the burning gaze of Christ in the next life. Those fleshly built assemblies will burn as wood, hay, and stubble at His throne. Every deviation from the precise Word, as well as all the fast-food-type programs and gimmicks used in God's work, is abomination in His sight. Only the means which are in accord with the will and way and Word of God will prove to have produced gold, silver, and precious stone in the end.

Prayer is the key that unlocks the ordained ways of God for men. Because no human rationale is fit for God's gospel—it came not by it nor assimilates any part of it—, and because only God's prescribed ways are worthy of it, prayerfulness is required to find the mind of God in His Word and to effect the gospel's proper presentations and support. All efforts that are man-made are a reproach to the beauties of Christ Jesus and His Cross.

There are reverberating echoes from many Uzzah-types saying still: "Well, it was okay for Uzzah to grab the ark to save it from harm. David was already disobedient in moving the ark in the manner that he did, and one more fault shouldn't hurt anything. No one is perfect; besides, we are justified in violating God's ways, because the circumstances require it, and besides, everyone else is doing it. Even if it is wrong, the work of God would suffer if we do not continue with these unscriptural practices" They reason that since David was already

in error, no matter what Uzzah did would have been wrong anyway; therefore there is no point in even trying to correct what is being done in error, lest the work suffer loss. They reason: **“Let’s just continue to do it this way even though we know it’s wrong, or else God’s great work would suffer irreparably.”** Listen to *the wisdom that is from above, that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*<sup>2</sup> as it answers to all,

No! God’s work will not ever suffer in any way when we do the things of God God’s prescribed way. We can begin to obey God right now, or at any point in time, and leave the clearing of the rubble to God, which difficulties were caused by our former disobedience. He blesses righteous means only, and discernment of His methodology and guidance in His ways, are through honest prayer only. Amen!

#### SOME LESSONS TO LEARN FROM OUR TEXT

1. Godly wisdom first requires *purity*—obedience to God’s principles, methods, Laws, i.e. His Will, Way and Word—before, and as a controller of, our *peacemaking, gentleness, accommodation, mercy and good fruits*—else it be *hypocrisy*, *James 3:17*.
2. Every challenge brought to us in God’s work must be approached as completely new, and is not at all to be dealt with in the same manner as any former one, even when it appears to be just the same, *II Samuel 5:18 with verses 22-23*.
3. All of Providence is the work of God, *II Samuel 6:7*
4. Providence must be measured properly by the joint inquiries of prayer and the Word, before being joyfully interpreted and acclaimed as a blessing on our efforts for God, *II Samuel 6:5 with verse 7*.
5. All Providence should be appreciated as good directions from God, even when some seem to cause hurt and therefore cannot be properly understood, *II Samuel 6:8*.

<sup>2</sup> *James 3:17*

6. Providence should be surveyed thoroughly, and meditated upon continually and prayerfully in order for circumstances confronting us to be understood aright, *II Samuel 6:12-13*.
  
7. Prayer is the best routine for waiting for the Lord's way to be revealed before doing anything for God, *II Samuel 5:10, 23*.
  
8. Proper motives and sentimentalism do not suffice for doing the work of God, when void of honest prayer and the honest Word, *II Samuel 6:1-6*.
  
9. The Word of God must be approached prayerfully and studied diligently if our efforts are to be spiritually profitable to God's Kingdom, *II Samuel 6:1-3* with *I Chronicles 15:12-13*.
  
10. Prayer is always the first order in any enterprise for God's glory, *II Samuel 5:17* through *II Samuel 6:15*.

## NOTES