

The Life of David

David and Michal

2 Samuel 6:16-23

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David and Michal

Scripture

Second Samuel 6 is about David bringing the ark of the Lord (also known as the ark of the covenant) to Jerusalem.

The ark was the visible symbol of God's presence in the midst of his covenant people. Seventy years earlier the Philistines had captured the ark from the people of God. However, they did not keep it for long because it turned out to be a dangerous trophy. For about 50 years the ark had been stored in Abinadab's home.

David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem was disastrous. He did not follow God's clear instructions (in Numbers 4:5–15) about how the ark was to be carried. One of Abinadab's sons, Uzzah, lost his life when he touched the ark to prevent it from falling, which was a direct violation of God's written word.

David became fearful and left the ark at Obed-edom's house. God blessed Obed-edom and all his household. Three months later David heard about God's blessing on Obed-edom and all his household. So David decided to try again and bring the ark to Jerusalem. This time he obeyed all of God's instructions about how the ark was to be transported. God blessed David for his obedience, as well as for his desire to restore the ark to its central place of worship for the people of God.

But not everyone rejoiced with David. David's first wife, Michal, saw what David did and reacted with scorn and contempt.

Let's read about David and Michal in 2 Samuel 6:16-23:

¹⁶ As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, 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. ¹⁷ And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings and

peace offerings before the Lord. ¹⁸ And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts ¹⁹ and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.

²⁰ And David returned to bless his household. But Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David and said, “How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!” ²¹ And David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. ²² I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor.” ²³ And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death. (2 Samuel 6:16-23)

Introduction

The book of Genesis tells us that God created Adam and Eve. Immediately after God created them we read in Genesis 1:28a, “And God blessed them.” He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden where they were to exercise dominion over God’s creation. God said that they could of the fruit of all the trees except the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our first parents enjoyed a wonderful, personal, face-to-face relationship with God. It was paradise on earth. It was a time of blessing.

But one day, Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s explicit command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They were banished from the Garden of Eden and cut off from the presence of God. Their former life of blessing now

become a life of misery. Question 19 of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks, “What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?” And the answer is: “All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.”¹

In the narrative of David bringing the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, we see different responses to the Lord’s will. One response brings blessing and the other response brings misery.

Lesson

Second Samuel 6:16-23 shows us different responses to the Lord’s will.

There are two responses to the Lord’s will:

1. Obeying the Lord’s Will Brings Blessing (6:16-19)
2. Opposing the Lord’s Will Brings Misery (6:20-23)

I. Obeying the Lord’s Will Brings Blessing (6:16-19)

First, obeying the Lord’s will brings blessing.

David’s predecessor King Saul had no interest in the ark of the covenant. It had remained in the house of Abinadab throughout Saul’s entire forty-two-year reign and he did absolutely nothing to give the ark of the covenant its proper, central place in the worship of God’s people. David was crowned as king over Judah and seven and a half years later he was crowned as king over all Israel. It was then that David made Jerusalem his political capitol city. And it was also then that David wanted Jerusalem to be the religious capitol city for the people of God. That is when David brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem.

I have already mentioned that David’s first attempt to bring

¹ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*, 3rd edition. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996).

the ark to Jerusalem was disastrous. But, David's second attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem was successful.

Verse 16 says, **“As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, 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.”** At this point, David was unaware of Michal's view of him. We shall return to this later when we examine Michal's response to the Lord's will. We note that **as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David**, that is, Jerusalem, **King David was leaping and dancing before the Lord**. He was thrilled that **the ark of the Lord** was being restored to its central position in the midst of God's people.

Obedying the Lord's will brings blessing in two ways.

A. Obeying the Lord's Will Brings Blessing to Me (6:17)

First, obeying the Lord's will brings blessing to me.

We read in verse 17a, **“And they brought in the ark of the Lord and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it.”** When the ark of the Lord was first constructed, God had Moses construct a tent, known as the tabernacle, which was where the ark was kept. However, **the tent that David pitched for it** was not the tabernacle. The tabernacle was most likely destroyed by the Philistines. Scholars believe that David's tent was similar in design to the original tabernacle. **The ark of the Lord** stayed in **the tent that David had pitched for it** until David's son Solomon built a temple for it.

Having set the ark in its place, we read in verse 17b, **“And David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord.”** Most likely, though David was in charge of the offerings, they were actually offered by priests who were ordained to perform that particular function. The main purpose of the **burnt offerings** were “to atone for man's sin by propitiating God's wrath”;

in addition it “could be offered as an act of obedience or thanksgiving.”² The **peace offerings** were principally “a festival meal,” celebrating or expressing “peace” in the fullest sense of peace with God.³ Having obeyed the Lord’s will, David knew the blessing of God in a deep and personal way.

Do you want to know God’s blessing in your life? “Then,” as commentator Gordon Keddie says, “[you] must realize that discipleship is not a spectator sport.”⁴ Far too many people want the blessing of God, they want eternal life, and so they think that all they need to do is show up to a worship service once or twice a month, and that will punch their ticket to heaven and glory. But, my dear friend, if heaven is really in your heart (by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone), your zeal for God will be demonstrably seen day by day in your obedience to the Lord’s will.

B. Obeying the Lord’s Will Brings Blessing to Others (6:18-19)

And second, obeying the Lord’s will brings blessing to others.

Verses 18-19 say, **“And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts and distributed among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins to each one. Then all the people departed, each to his house.”** Keddie writes: “David’s attitude breathes the spirit of an enjoyed obedience.”⁵

David was so taken up with God’s blessings to him that he wanted to pass God’s blessings on to others as well. David knew

² Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 63, 58.

³ Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, 75, 77.

⁴ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1990), 54.

⁵ Gordon J. Keddie, *Triumph of the King: The Message of 2 Samuel*, 53.

deeply that God had chosen him, that he had given him new life, that he had called him to service, and so out of David's overflowing blessing he wanted to bless others.

One sees this especially with new believers. They come to know Jesus as their Savior. They know that their sins are forgiven. They know that they have new life in Christ. And they are so excited about it that they want to tell others all about Jesus and the new life that they have found in Jesus.

My dear brothers and sisters, sometimes we are very reserved as Christians. Some of us are by nature and temperament more reserved. But, God calls us to bless others. One of the simplest ways to do so is to tell others about what God has done and is doing in our lives. Tell others about Jesus. That is the greatest blessing we can pass along to others.

II. Opposing the Lord's will brings misery (6:20-23)

And second, opposing the Lord's will brings misery.

After the great celebration ended in the city and all the people went home, **David** also **returned to bless his household** (6:20a). The blessings that David had experienced and shared with others he now wanted to share with **his own household**. **But** when he got to his house, **Michal the daughter of Saul**, who earlier in the day "despised him in her heart" (6:16), **came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"** (6:20b). Michal thought that David's behavior was vulgar and completely unbecoming of a king. David had been wearing a linen ephod, which was a simple linen robe worn by a priest. It does not seem that David was trying to usurp the role of a priest. He was simply wearing a garment to worship the Lord. But Michal was appalled that he would set aside his royal robes for an ephod.

The author of Samuel notes three times in this section that Michal is **“the daughter of Saul”** (6:16, 20, 23) rather than “the husband of David.” Why is that? Though there was a time when Michal loved David and even saved his life from her father, Saul, she apparently no longer felt any tenderness and love for David. Perhaps she was upset that David insisted she be returned to him from her second husband. But the question still remains: why is Michal referred to as **“the daughter of Saul”** rather than “the husband of David”?

I believe the answer is that her relationship to the Lord was similar to Saul and not David. Saul had no heart for the Lord. After all, he did nothing to bring the ark of the Lord to a central place in the covenant community of God. He merely paid lip-service to God and had no relationship with God at all. David, on the other hand, had a deep and personal relationship with God.

Michal’s understanding of worship was mere outward formality. To her, outward appearances were extremely important. That is why she despised David for wearing a linen ephod and dancing in what she considered a vulgar way before the Lord.

Michal represents people who attend worship to be seen by others. They go because the outward formality is important. But there is no heart relationship with God. Let us never forget that the Lord does not look on the outward appearance. He looks on the heart to see whether we worship him in spirit and in truth.

My dear friend, let me urge you to examine yourself. Do you claim to be a Christian but you have no relationship with God? Do you attend worship services because you want to be seen by others rather than to pour out your heart in worship to your God?

And David said to Michal, “It was before the Lord, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord—and I will celebrate before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be abased in your eyes. But

by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honor” (6:21-22). David’s point is that his focus was on the Lord and not on what people thought of him. Michal cared about David’s status as king. But David understood that he was the recipient of God’s amazing grace, and his response was one of exuberant gratitude. David knew that God had chosen him. He did not choose to be king. He did not fight and defeat Saul to be king. No, God had chosen, protected, and elevated him in his good time to serve as the leader of God’s covenant people. David knew that **before the Lord** there was no place for arrogance and show, as though he were the primary focus of attention. No, the focus of his attention was on the Lord his God.

When we gather for worship, who is our focus? Are we concerned about what other people think of us? Or, do we worship and celebrate before the Lord? There is nothing more important in all of life than worship before the Lord. All of our life here on earth is a preparation for worshiping the Lord in glory. If we are not believers we will never have an opportunity to worship the Lord in eternity again. Now is the time to delight in worshiping our great God and Savior.

Finally, we read in verse 23, **“And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death.”** The blessing that came to Obed-edom and all his household (6:11), to David (6:17), to the people as a whole (6:18), and to David’s household in particular (6:20) was not shared by Michal. It is possible that she and David did not ever again have intimate relations, and that is the reason for her childlessness. More likely, however, is that her childlessness is seen as the judgment of God because she opposed the Lord’s will. The Lord had passed over Saul and given the kingdom to David. But Michal refused to acknowledge that.

Now, I hasten to say that childlessness is not usually because of God’s judgment. We live in a fallen world and sometimes our bodies simply don’t function fully. Further, I acknowledge that for

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those who have no children, it is incredibly painful. I want to affirm that you are loved by God and, hopefully, by others as well.

However, in the case of Michal we see that opposing the Lord's will brings misery. One cannot disobey the Lord's will without consequences. Uzzah touched the ark of the Lord and was struck dead. Michal opposed the Lord's will and was childless.

Pastor Colin Smith addresses people who object to God's judgment on sin:

You may say, "Wait a minute. How can any sin deserve everlasting destruction? If God is just, how can he punish like this?"

The best answer I ever heard to that question was given by a friend of mine who is a middle school pastor. He outlined the stages of the following scenario:

- Suppose a middle school student punches another student in class. What happens? The student is given a detention.
- Suppose during the detention, this boy punches the teacher. What happens? The student gets suspended from school.
- Suppose on the way home, the same boy punches a policeman on the nose. What happens? He finds himself in jail.
- Suppose some years later, the very same boy is in a crowd waiting to see the President of the United States. As the President passes by, the boy lunges forward to punch the President. What happens? He is shot dead by the secret service.

In every case the crime is precisely the same, but the severity of the crime is measured by the one against whom it is committed. What comes from sinning against God? Answer: Everlasting destruction.⁶

Michal opposed the Lord's will and she suffered the misery of childlessness. We never hear of Michal again, and I don't know where she is in eternity.

⁶ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2011/august/5081511.html>.

My dear friend, opposing the Lord's will brings misery. Let us examine ourselves regularly to make sure that we are not opposing the Lord's will.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of David and Michal in 2 Samuel 6:16-23, let us experience the blessing of God by obeying him.

I mentioned at the start of this message that the ark was the visible symbol of God's presence in the midst of his covenant people. David wanted to restore the ark to its central place in the midst of God's covenant people.

God sent his Son Jesus to be our ark. He was more than the visible presence of God in the midst of his people. He was God with us—Emmanuel.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Jesus came to reconcile lost sinners with a holy God. Jesus came to pay the penalty for our sin. We were like the boy punching God in the face. But, Jesus stepped in front of us and took our punishment in our place.

If you have never done so, turn to Jesus now and repent of your sin. Put your trust in Jesus and ask him to pay the penalty for all of your sin. And then live your life in obedience to God so that you may experience his blessing in your life.

And if you profess to be a Christian, examine yourself to see if you are merely going through the motions. Repent of your half-heartedness, and love and worship your God with loving zeal. Amen.

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The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

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