

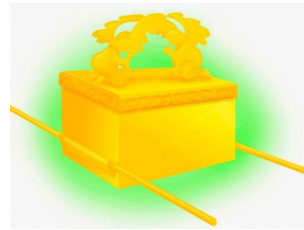
LONGING FOR THE ARK OF GOD'S PRESENCE

TEXT: 2 Samuel 6:11: *The Ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household.*

For years untold the Children of Israel had talked and dreamed of those early days when their forefathers were led through the wilderness to the Promised Land with the Ark of God.

Psalms 44:1: We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

How the Glory of the Lord had rested like a resource of protection over the Tabernacle and above the Mercy Seat. What miraculous power had been manifested in their midst. But alas! The Glory had long since departed because of disobedience and sin. The Ark was taken captive by their enemies, the Philistines.



Thus, an emptiness came into the Tabernacle and the Temple — a vacant spot in their worship that nothing man-made could ever fill. There is something about the Presence of God! When its Glory is gone, the people of God look pitiful. No artificial light can replace it. The Philistines had taken the Ark and slaughtered 30,000 footmen. That — along with the news that his two sons had been slain in battle — broke the heart of Eli, the priest, and the shock ended his life.

Now, throughout the reign of Saul, little or nothing had been said about the Ark. No effort had been made to bring it again unto its place. It is doubtful if Saul even had enough spiritual hunger to seriously miss its Presence.

God will not push Himself on us. He longs toward us, and His delights are toward the sons of men. When we walk down the Emmaus Road, Jesus will draw near, for He is not far from any one of us.

Luke 24:13-15, 32:

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called

Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.



14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?

He speaks until our hearts burn within us, but when we come to our home — unless we bid Him welcome — He will go on. *“But they constrained Him”* — and He came in.

Luke 24:28-29:

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further.

29 But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.

Saul had once known the anointing of the Lord and had been blessed, but he became filled with pride. The Lord will not dwell with the proud and haughty, but with the humble and those of a broken and contrite heart.

It must have seemed at times as though the place of worship in the Temple would know the Presence of the Lord no more. Thus has it been in our day also. For generations we have heard and read of the mighty Presence and Power of the Lord resting upon the early church, and the supernatural manifestations of the mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire which started the Church on its onward march in the Name of Jesus. It did not matter to them if they had been stoned, whipped, lived in poverty, or were in prison cells in chains, so long as they felt the Presence of God.



Many are like Saul who had lost the anointing and the vision of what it means to see God dwelling in the midst of His people, with never a mention of a *real united going out to bring back the Ark*. Many have declared it cannot be had today!

Praise the Lord – they have come too late with those tones of unbelief. God will raise up His Davids with longings and heart hunger, and they will declare that the

Ark must come back. No sooner had David ascended the throne than his ears became tuned to the voice of the Almighty. He was deeply moved by the Spirit to bring back God's Ark to God's House. So he went forth and gathered the people together unto the city of David.

Whenever we want the Lord and will seek after Him, He will meet us over half way and will work from the other end of the line. God wants us to be filled with His Spirit. When the Presence of God is on the church, it is impregnable, and the forces of evil are powerless, baffled, and defeated.

Our downfall originates from within. Like termites, dry rot, and worms in fruit — worldliness, pleasure seeking, and the riches of the world, sins of envy, jealousy, strife, gossiping, prayer-less-ness and indifference — will eat out our insides and leave nothing but an empty shell. There is nothing more empty than a put-on shout or demonstration; nothing more rattling or squeaky than a soul not lubricated with the oil of Holy Spirit.

The secret of God's Presence is in our consecration to Him. He will not live in unclean hearts. Spiritual blindness follows as a result of our not adding to our faith - virtue, knowledge, temperance . . .

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2 Peter 1:5-10:

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

When preachers and other people begin to get cold and backslide, they are not wanting anyone to talk about the power of the Presence of the Ark of the Covenant. They question and debate the power of the Davids to get the Bible experiences

again. They are more afraid of anyone else getting the power of God than they are the possibility of its being obtainable. It will show them up. They are afraid that some noise and shouting of all-night prayer meetings or Hallelujahs might disturb the silent dignity of the deserted churches — churches that have been deserted by God, then by man who must have God and the Presence of the power of the Spirit to be happy.

David knew something was wrong. There was no triumphant shout, no singing in the Spirit, no anointing, and no prayer power going up to God that would cause people to become concerned about the Ark resting in its rightful place within the House of the Lord. One thing is sure and certain, and that is: **If we are not clean, right, and ready to greet the Presence of God, then that which has caused its departure will also hinder its return.**

The Presence of God in the Ark caused much trouble to the Philistines. They could not understand why their God, Dagon, would fall over continually before the Ark of God in their temple.

1 Samuel 5:3-12:

3 And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

4 And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.



5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

6 But the Hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

7 And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The Ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for His Hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

8 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the Ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the Ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the Ark of the God of Israel about thither.

9 And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the Hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and He smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

The Presence of God which blesses one, makes another miserable. It makes one merry, but makes another sad. It heals one, but causes another to die. The cry of the city of Ekron went up to Heaven.

1 Samuel 5:10-12:

10 Therefore they sent the Ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the Ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the Ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

11 So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to Heaven.

They wanted to get rid of that which the man of God, David, wanted and sought after. It all lies in the condition of the heart.

The fetching of the Ark was accompanied by stately ceremonies. The king himself accompanied the ecclesiastic officers. But instead of bringing the Ark the way God had prescribed — upon the shoulders of the priests — David resorted to the same method — a cart — that the Philistines had used when they captured the Ark.

2 Samuel 6:2-3, 6-10

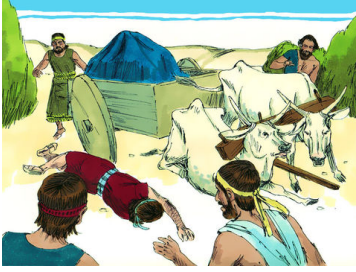
2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the Ark of God, whose name is called by the Name of the LORD of Hosts Who dwelleth between the Cherubims.

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



6 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.

7 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.



Many are making the same mistake today. Disaster and even spiritual death have befallen those who have tried to interfere or govern the movings of the Ark of God. The Presence of God brings judgment to the careless and to those who do not follow His laws. Because the Word of God was neglected, Uzziah lost

his life in the attempt to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem when he extended his hand to keep the Ark steady when the oxen stumbled.

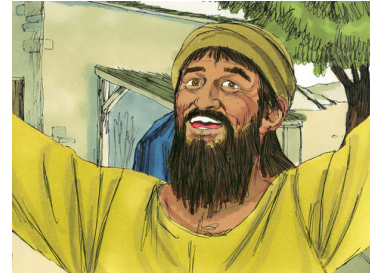
8 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perezuzzah to this day.

9 And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, How shall the Ark of the LORD come to me?

10 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.

Terror seized the hearts of the whole assembly, and fear made them decide to leave the Ark in the house of Obed-Edom. They returned to the city, humiliated.

Prosperity, great joy, and blessing at once filled the house of Obed-Edom. The unbelievable news began to spread everywhere. Cattle bare twins and triplets. He was harvesting while other farmers were still waiting for their crops to sprout. When he planted his crops, everything was bigger, better, and more abundant than was ever heard of before.



The reputation of Obed-Edom spread finally to the palace of the King. Within three months he had seen what God can do. **David's heart was overwhelmed and inspired.** The priests had searched the Scriptures and found out they had committed a great offense and had gone contrary to the Word of God. For in the days of Moses, the Lord had told him to give oxen to the Levites for the transporting of the Tabernacle whenever they moved from place to place. However, no oxen were to be given to the Kohathites, because their duty was to transport the Ark which they were commanded to bear upon their shoulders:

Numbers 7:4-9:

4 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
5 Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the Tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service.
6 And Moses took the wagons and the oxen, and gave them unto the Levites.
7 Two wagons and four oxen he gave unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service:
8 And four wagons and eight oxen he gave unto the sons of Merari, according unto their service, under the hand of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.
9 But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none: because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders.



Numbers 4:15: And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the Tabernacle of the congregation.

We must go God's way to get the Presence. No new, fashionable methods, movies, card-signing, or hand-shaking will bring the Ark back into the church.

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Little missions and tabernacles have found their success and power in nothing else but the Presence of God. Many have been saved, healed, and filled with the Spirit. It has been noised about, and it made many others hungry for the same blessing. Once again the Word of God is being used as a guide, along with some of the old-fashioned ways — the Amen corner, the testimony meetings, the mourner's bench — to bring people back to salvation through the Blood of Jesus. The Deity of Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world will knock all the pride and starchiness out of the preacher and the saints, and will put glory into our souls.

The sanctified priests this time lifted up the Ark upon their shoulders by means of the golden staves which passed through golden rings, and so they upheld the

Ark. Finding they were not smitten, David paused and offered seven bullocks and rams as a sacrifice unto the Lord.

2 Samuel 6:12: 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.



Then, putting off his royal robes, and laying aside his crown, he dressed in a robe like the poorest and humblest of the people, and went before the Ark. With unreserved ecstasy in this glorious hour, he was leaping, singing, shouting, and dancing, full of the glory of God. He could not keep his feet still. They would not stay put. He danced with all his might!



While passing by his house doing this, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked out, heard the noise, and became offended. She was stirred to anger to see her husband so arrayed in the clothes of humility. She would rather see him in the robes of splendor. The demons of evil surmising, envy, and jealousy came to take hold of her. Michal was disgusted and filled with scorn. She did the devil's work — that of being an accuser.

The children of this world cannot understand the secret of our joy in the Lord. They do not know how it feels to be filled with joy until you nearly burst open. Many of you who stay home from meetings and don't go after the Presence of God — you will feel mighty mean when the power of God falls. When you move along with those who are eager for the fullness of God, you will feel as they do when they let God have His way in their heart.

After the Ark had been put in its place, David blessed the people.

2 Samuel 6:17-19:

17 And they brought in the Ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the Tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

18 And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the Name of the LORD of Hosts.

19 And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole

multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

After the worship service ended, David went home. If only she had been there to enjoy the blessings of the Lord which maketh rich the soul! But David met a disgruntled wife. With sarcastic tones she sneered at him: *“How gloriously the King of Israel acted today. Uncovering himself in the eyes of the handmaids, and showing off before the girls.”* Poor David — heartbroken as he heard her exaggerations of what he did. She made it appear as if he had behaved worse than one who is immodest, when actually he was shut out from the world.



2 Samuel 6:20-23:

20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to day, who uncovered himself to day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!

21 And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.

22 And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

What? His answer is amazing and wonderful. She had said he acted madly insane. So, he said, *“I am sorry, wife, to have displeased you. I’ll never dance again. I’ll not go back to that meeting again because I want to keep peace in the family.”* Is THAT what David said??

NO, NEVER! I know your weakness is to let down under persecution, but David did not dishonor God. You may go with us so far in worshipping the Lord, but when the glory of God falls, you will show your true colors and prove your spiritual condition. I have seen folks sulk like a possum, look like a bulldog, and fume. The Presence of God makes you sad, mad, or glad. To those hearing the joyful sound of praises to God and worship to the Master, they are strangely warmed.

David found trouble where it was least expected. Often those nearest to us cause us the most grief. Many a woman has picked, fussed, and contentiously nagged her husband: *"You are crazy, you haven't got a lick of sense, giving all your money away and letting religion get the best of you." "What brings you home so late?" "Why don't you stay out all night?"*

Often those nearest to us cause us the most grief.

"But honey, I am so happy. God gave us a wonderful meeting. I wish you could have been there."

"They have just thrown a spell on you and got you worked up."

Jesus said,

John 1:5: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

How could it? How could darkness do anything to light except oppose it? It could not be expected that they who serve the devil and love sin should enjoy the things of God.

What makes it so difficult is that our natural ties and affections, which are so delicate, are so brutally wounded by a close foe.

Dear ones, especially young people — may I entreat you as a father in the Lord — beware of the friendship of this world and unsaved companionship. It will steal your joy and torture you as long as you live if you marry against the Word of God. **Love is an opiate which blinds the mind from dangers, and lulls the heart into a sleep of indifference.**

Nothing, however terrifying, will ever move your will to choose to serve the Lord and please Him, unless my loving Saviour — through faith and prayer — takes you aside and shows you the awful end of willful disobedience to His Word. I have heard the sobbing cry of many a wife and mother and young man begging me to advise what to do now.



What did David do when his wife defied his worshipping the Lord?

2 Samuel 6:22a: I will yet be more vile than thus,

This was David's response. But be sure you are in the Spirit when you speak to the indignant, and know that irreparable harm can come from the response that has not been thought through.

Let this encourage you, dear hearts, that there are those who grow best under persecution, and under persecution they will be even hotter for the Lord.

“If my love for the Lord makes it appear that I have gone mad, then you ought to be very patient and easy with me, for fear I should grow worse. If I appear insane now, perhaps I might become even more wild. So, be gentle with me. If you have found a better path than I have found, then show it to me.”

Michal is like the spiritually-barren church that remains in the house of formality while persecuting those who are *happy in Christ*, standing where no music cheers, and no heavenly breezes thrill. She despised not David, but God! **Her pride was the devil's tool.**

Backslider, are you longing for God's Presence to be in your heart again? Sinner, you have burned out on the world and its pleasures. Do you feel a divine urge to come to Jesus? He once dwelt in the Tabernacle made with hands in the days of old, but now He dwells, when invited, in the human heart.

You are lost, eternally, if His Spirit does not live in you.

Colossians 1:20: And, having made peace through the Blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in Heaven.

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