

“The Critical Heart”  
2 Samuel 6:12-23  
(Preached at Trinity, December 16, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. David has become the king over the entire house of Israel. He has defeated the Philistines and he has established his house in Jerusalem. David determined it was time to move the Ark of the Covenant into the holy city.
2. It did not go as expected. David had gathered choice men from all of Israel, thirty-thousand in all. There was rejoicing and music as they advanced. The Ark had been placed upon a new cart and Uzzah and Ahio led the procession. As the oxen stumbled Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the Ark and he was immediately smitten dead by God. The music was silenced and the news made its way throughout the procession. Everyone would have been stunned by what had happened.
3. David became angry and determined to end the attempt to move the Ark. He felt God had acted arbitrarily and so he feared God. How could such a God dwell in the City of David?  
**2 Samuel 6:9 NAU** - "So David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"
4. He brought it to the home of Obed-edom. Interestingly, this was a Philistine. Even more interesting, his house was greatly blessed while in possession of the Ark. David got the message. The problem wasn't with the Ark. The problem was with irreverence towards God.
5. David determined to move the Ark a second time. Only this time, he gave proper reverence towards God.  
**1 Chronicles 15:11-15 NAU** - "Then David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab, <sup>12</sup> and said to them, "You are the heads of the fathers' *households* of the Levites; consecrate yourselves both you and your relatives, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* that I have prepared for it. <sup>13</sup> "Because you did not *carry it* at the first, the LORD our God made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance." <sup>14</sup> So the priests and the Levites consecrated themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. <sup>15</sup> The sons of the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles thereon, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD."
6. As with the first attempt to move the Ark, there was great celebration. But David's heart was even more joyous because he knew he was giving God the glory He deserved. He was treating the Ark in accordance with God's command. There is joy in obedience. David was leaping and dancing with joy. He had removed his royal robes and replaced them with a simple linen ephod. The king wanted to assure that all attention and all honor was being given to the King of kings.  
**2 Samuel 6:14-15 NAU** - "And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his* might, and David was wearing a linen ephod. <sup>15</sup> So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet."

7. As the procession was advancing towards Jerusalem the unexpected once again occurred. The scene of the joyful occasion briefly shifts to an observer watching from a window. The joy of the occasion was marred by the critical heart of David's wife. Michal looked out of the window and saw David rejoicing and despised Him.
8. After blessing and dismissing the people David returned home with great joy on his heart. Never would he have expected the disdain of his wife—or was this the situation David faced with Michal continually.
- A. Her critical words were cutting, filled with scorn and criticism. She was void of respect for her husband. She was void of love and empathy. And she couldn't comprehend the great joy of bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.  
**2 Samuel 6:20 NAU** - "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!"
- B. How often is the joy of Christians misunderstood by lost family members. How difficult it is for believers to dwell in the same home with unbelievers.
9. Did Solomon know something of his step-mother's bitter, critical heart.  
**Proverbs 19:13 NAU** - "A foolish son is destruction to his father, And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping."  
**Proverbs 21:9 NAU** - " It is better to live in a corner of a roof Than in a house shared with a contentious woman."
10. One has to wonder what has happened to Michal. Years before she loved David. And David loved her.  
**1 Samuel 18:20 NAU** - "Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David."  
 Michal had put her life at risk to help David escape from her father, Saul. After many years of separation she is now reunited with David. She had every advantage. She was married to a Godly man.  
 She was married to a king. She was a queen.
11. Had Michal put on her royal garments that morning and set out with David in celebration of the presence of God how different things might have been. The king and queen would have been a wonderful display of marital harmony and shared reverence for God. But this was not the case. Instead, Michal exposed her corrupt heart.  
 To Michal the Ark had little meaning. The sight of people worshipping had little impact on her. All she could do is criticize. She was graceless.  
John Hercus described her demeanor: "When David came home at last, tired and flushed, still delirious with the truth he had been singing and dancing all that day, Michal rose from the chaise lounge on which she had been reclining. Her makeup was just right, not a wisp of untidied hair was out of place, not a crease in her beautifully fitted gown. Her long lashes hung disdainfully over eyes that looked him up and down with a quick contemptuous glance of scorn. 'Well!' she said slowly, deliberately averting her eyes as if from some distinctly repugnant sight. 'What a spectacle! What a scene the king of Israel made of himself today! It was simply disgusting. Dancing about like that with all the people watching, kicking your legs up in the air in that shameless way. You should have seen the gaping of all the servant girls! It was positively vulgar!" And she turned her back."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002).

12. Michal's problem was a hard, critical heart. It is telling that she is referred to as the daughter of Saul three times in this chapter, rather than the wife of David. She was much more like her father than her husband. She was truly the daughter of Saul. To Michal David was behaving quite unbecoming of the king. David was behaving shamefully. She found it easy to criticize and complain.
13. Matthew Henry describes her wickedness: "To have abused any man thus for his pious zeal would have been very profane, but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to have revered, and one whose prudence and virtue were above the reach of malice itself to disparage, one who had shown such affection for her that he would not accept a crown unless he might have her restored to him, was a most base and wicked thing, and showed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her than of David's wife or Jonathan's sister."<sup>2</sup>
- A. A hard, critical heart destroys relationships.
- B. There isn't a single one of us who have not expressed anger against someone. But to have continual anger seething in our heart will consume you.
14. Tonight, I want to offer you two cures for the hard, critical heart. Ultimately, the only cure is the transforming grace of the Gospel. But how does this work out practically. Let me describe two ways.
- I. The chief cure is love. This is the first grace that Paul describes as the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the redeemed.
- A. Such love is enflamed with Christ.
1. This is the heart of Christianity.  
**Matthew 22:35-40 NAS** - "a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him,<sup>36</sup> "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"<sup>37</sup> And He said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'<sup>38</sup> "This is the great and foremost commandment.<sup>39</sup> "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>40</sup> "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."
2. Had Michal loved God with a heart of transforming grace she would have rejoiced with David at the arrival of the Ark.
- B. Paul described the impact of love upon the heart in **1 Cor. 13**  
**1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NAU** - "Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant,<sup>5</sup> does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,<sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;<sup>7</sup> bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
1. Love will change the way we look upon others. Love destroys a critical heart. It enables us to look upon others with grace and mercy.
2. Paul says that love does not impute evil to other people or judge them as evil without cause
- a. Paul uses the word λογίζομαι – "does not take into account a wrong"

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 447.

- b. It is the same word used to describe the imputed righteousness of justification.  
**Romans 3:28 NAU** - "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law."  
**Romans 4:3 NAU** - "For what does the Scripture say? "And Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."
      - 3. Hugh Binning – “Our nature is malignant and wicked, and therefore most suspicious and jealous, and apt to take all in the worst part; but love has much candor and humanity in it, and can believe well of every man, as far as truth will permit. It is not a rigid or censorious judge; it allows as much latitude to others as it would desire of others.”<sup>3</sup>
    - C. Love does not keep a record of sins committed by others.
      - 1. Love does not allow for a censorious spirit – a judgmental heart. It does not think evil of others. It does not keep in memory each and every offense committed by others.
      - 2. One can only surmise the motives of Michal. Her criticisms of her husband were unfounded. Why had she become so bitter towards David. Whatever her motives, the text paints it in an evil light.
      - 3. Michal no longer loved her husband. Genuine love involves overlooking the imperfections in others or being hyper-critical
      - 4. Love will bring us to think the best of others as the case will allow
        - a. This doesn’t mean we overlook sin. Most of our critical thoughts are not about matters of sin.
        - b. Even in matters of sin, our heart should weep. The hyper-critical person seems to glory in the sins of others.
        - c. This person is prone to gossip – to speak evil of others. He will pick up on a rumor and spread it with glee.
        - d. Paul describes the contentious man who doesn’t walk according to the doctrines of godliness:  
**1 Timothy 6:4 NAU** - "he is conceited *and* understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,"
- II. The second cure for a critical heart I want us to consider is the grace of empathy
  - A. Empathy is the ability to understand and share in the feelings and experiences of others.
    - 1. Empathy should be one of the great marks of Christianity  
**1 Corinthians 12:26-27 NAU** - "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."
    - 2. How can we all be a part of the same body and disregard the condition of one another.

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<sup>3</sup> Binning, Hugh, *A Treatise of Christian Love – Puritan Paperbacks*, (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), Page 25.

3. The person with critical heart segregates himself from the others  
He looks at their actions and evaluates them according to his own opinions without considering the other person.  
He continually questions the motives of others, seldom putting himself in the place of the other person.
    - a. Old proverb: “Don’t judge another man until you’ve walked a mile in his shoes.”
    - b. Atticus Finch told his daughter in *To Kill a Mockingbird* – “You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”
- B. Empathy has fallen on hard times
1. People in our nation are devouring one another. No one is taking the time to consider the other persons point of view. In such an environment we will tear one another apart.
  2. This was Michal’s problem. She was completely unable to comprehend David’s joy. To Michal, David’s dancing was a crude display of indecency. To David, it was the expression of his worship of God.
  3. Today, many see empathy as a weakness, as something that gets in the way of climbing to the top and achieving success.
  4. Studies are showing that the internet and social media are having a negative impact upon the ability to empathize with others.  
One has observed - “The internet diminishes our face-to-face, physical interactions with others and replaces them with conversations conducted as disembodied versions of ourselves. The temptation to lash out is ever present. And it comes down to the decline in empathy. Hunched over our computers, communicating as disembodied blobs, we’re suffering a dearth of empathy transference. We’re little islands of one, free from the experience of stepping into another’s shoes, truly feeling what they’re feeling, and *understanding* where they’re coming from.”<sup>4</sup>
  5. Only when we truly share in the feelings and experiences of others will we find our critical hearts melting away.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/our-disembodied-selves-and-the-decline-of-empathy/>.

Conclusion:

1. As we've seen earlier in this chapter, God will be treated as holy. When people fail to reverence God they come under His judgment.
  - A. When the men of Beth-shemesh took possession of the Ark they put it upon a stone to be gazed upon and then they looked into the Ark in vain curiosity. God took their life for their irreverence.
 

**1 Samuel 6:19-20 NAS** - "He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter. <sup>20</sup> And the men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?"
  - B. When Uzzah touched the Ark God struck him dead because of his irreverence.
2. But what does this have to do with Michal? In her hard, critical heart, she criticized David for his reverence and God judged her.
 

**2 Samuel 6:23 NAU** - "Michal the daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death."

  - A. One commentator wrote that this was because David now refused to go unto her. Rather, this was God's judgment upon Michal for her hard, critical heart.
    - a. It was a severe judgment. She was married to David the king. Her son would have been David's firstborn and rightful successor to the throne.
    - b. The house of David would have no descendants from the house of Saul.
  - B. In contrast, we are told in **Verse 12** that the house of Obed-edom was blessed of God.
    - a. We have to assume that the Ark was thrust upon him. He didn't have any choice but to receive it. But having the Ark in his possession he treated it with holy reverence.
    - b. We aren't told specifically the nature of the blessings but in 1Chro 26 we are told he had eight sons and many descendants. Contrast this with Michal who was barren the rest of her life.
 

**1 Chronicles 26:8 NAU** - "All these *were* of the sons of Obed-edom; they and their sons and their relatives *were* able men with strength for the service, 62 from Obed-edom."
3. God is displeased with the hard, critical heart, particularly those who criticize the people of God as they seek to honor Him with their lives.