

The Ark and the Priests Remain at Jerusalem

Call to Worship: Psalm 71:1-3

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 15:13-23

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 15:24-29

Hymn #80- *How Firm a Foundation*

Hymn #487- *Faith of Our Fathers*

Hymn Insert- *By Faith*

Introduction:

David has learned about Absalom's conspiracy, against him and his kingdom. Recognizing the severity of the threat posed against him, and against the city of Jerusalem, he and his servants have fled toward the Brook Kidron, where they all crossed over, heading toward the Mount of Olives. Last time, we especially considered the loyalty of those, who clung to David, during this time of great trial.

This morning, we move on to find that Zadok and the Levites also seek to follow David, carrying the Ark of God with them. However, David will send them back to Jerusalem, for reasons that we will now consider. And as we ponder this scene, we will find a humble and an exemplary faith, exhibited by David, which should prove to be valuable to us, as we continue to strive, on our trek to glory.

I. Zadok and the Priests Bring the Ark to David

Led by Zadok, the properly ordained Levites (the Kohathites) carry the ark, following behind David. They set it down, until all the people have crossed over the Brook Kidron, so as to avoid defiling it, by allowing the common people to come near it. Even now, in the midst of urgent circumstances, they dare not neglect to regard the Lord as holy, lest another "Uzzah incident" take place. So careful were they, in fact, that Abiathar (the high priest) went on ahead of them, and watched from an incline on the Mount of Olives, until all the people had passed, before signaling the Levites to pick up the ark and continue on (vs. 24). However, David prevents them from continuing on, any further.

"Then the king said to Zadok, 'Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him" (vs. 25-26).

For the priests to carry the ark around (on their shoulders), and that, at a safe distance from the others, would have been a great burden for the priests, and for a fleeing David. And furthermore, it would have also posed a great risk to them, should Absalom find them, following David. And so, David, recognizing that they would have been much safer in Jerusalem (Absalom would not have harmed the priests of the Lord, if they remained), orders Zadok to return (with the ark) into the city. Again, David's tender concern for others, and for the ark itself, is manifested here.

Also, it is important to highlight, both, David's great faith here, as well as his resignation to accept whatever the Lord's will is, concerning this matter. We will dig further into this, when we come to our applications, but notice brethren, the unselfish confidence, which David has in his God here. While it could be very easy to covet the ark's presence with him, especially during this time of trial, David says, as it were, "Zadok, bring it back into the city. If the Lord wills, He can and will, bring me back to see it, along with His holy tent of dwelling. And if He no longer delights in me, then let Him do what is best in His sight. I accept whatever He ordains, and whatever His good providence has in store for me. I am resigned to His will, and will attempt to force nothing on my part." Indeed brethren, such a humble and submissive resignation to the will of God, presents us with a profound display of the type of faith, that a created being ought to have in his/her Creator!

"The king also said to Zadok the priest, 'Are you not a seer (prophet)? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me'" (vs. 27-28).

Here, we find another very practical and helpful reason, for which David sends Zadok back to Jerusalem. As a respected priest and prophet, he would be able to obtain valuable information, which can help David, as David seeks to regain his throne. A lot of present unanswered questions, such as, "How big is the conspiracy," "What are Absalom's plans and movements (going forward)," and a host of other pertinent information, could be passed on to Zadok, and by him, to David. He could be David's eyes and ears, without anyone suspecting it. And as he obtains valuable intel, he could send one of his sons, to report his findings to David. As a respected priest and prophet, he would be safe, and he would be in an ideal position to do this.

II. Zadok and the Levites Return with the Ark to Jerusalem

"Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there" (vs. 29).

Being then, in an ideal, safe and strategic position to help David regain his throne, Zadok, Abiathar, and the priests, return (with the ark) to Jerusalem.

III. Closing Thoughts and Applications

Having worked through the text, brethren, let us then conclude our time, by considering a few closing thoughts and applications for this morning:

1) Let us consider again, the care, which the Levites had taken, in transporting the ark, even in the midst of very difficult circumstances. It could have been very easy for the Levites to have rushed things, focusing solely on the outward circumstances of the conspiracy, with little concern for continuing to exercise great care in the transporting of the ark. But instead, they regarded God's holiness, as a thing to be deeply regarded, and not treated casually, even at the risk of losing time. They knew that regardless of the circumstances, God is to be revered and hallowed, at *all* times; in times of joy, and in times of trial.

And brethren, let us be cautious, to ensure that we strive to be conscious of the same. We have already considered this from the standpoint of becoming too loose (or irreverent), when basking in the joy of grace and forgiveness, which have freely come to us, in the Gospel. We especially emphasized this, when considering the earlier events surrounding the death of Uzzah, when David had transported the ark to Jerusalem. But here, we have the caution given, on the other side of the coin. You see, brethren, there is the danger of allowing difficult trials, which are providentially ordained to test and strengthen our faith in Christ, to lead us to grow a bit careless in our walk, as if to assume, that our sufferings warrant such a response. We see ourselves as victims, of a sort, and convince ourselves, unwittingly, if not consciously, that we have a right to loosen the "reverence strings," rather than all the more, striving to magnify the glory of God and Christ, even, and especially, by means of our suffering.

Generally, some of the greatest growth spurts in grace, where many of our prayers for sanctification (faithfulness, love for Christ, humility, holiness, dying to self and the world...etc) are answered, are obtained through persevering, during difficult trials. Those are the times, all the more, where we want to cling to Christ; those are the times, where we want to especially

guard our hearts and tow the line of obedience, because it is in the very context of our remaining faithful during such times, that all of the fruits of the Spirit spring forth, and our faith is greatly strengthened, when God carries us through to the other side. Those are the times, where we witness the power of God, in some of the most amazing ways, which greatly increases our love for, and faith in, Christ! We don't want to sabotage the whole process, by disregarding the holiness of God, and running to the unfulfilling, unrighteous, short lived, relief, found in any direction of idolatry. No! We would rather die than turn to drinking, drugs, pornography, lusts, gluttony, materialism...etc, because those things only slow us down, in the long run. They offer a way of escape, around the cross, when the cross is the only means of true growth and sanctification. Now brethren, we have all fallen in these kinds of ways, but let us stop returning to our vomit, seeking to convince ourselves, that this time, we may find Filet Mignon!

The way of growth and blessing, is always found, in the way of regarding God's holiness, even, and especially when it seems so inconvenient. Let us, reverently, bear up the ark of God, during our trials, brethren, and exercise care in our going forward, being willing to sacrifice a lot of things along the way...but *not* the holiness of God!

[*The unsaved have hardly an understanding at all, about the holiness of our Creator, but they must be sternly warned!]

2) Lastly, brethren, let us all draw from the example of David's great faith here, learning to resign ourselves, entirely to the will of God, which is right and proper...at *all* times. [Read vs. 25-26]

Now, at first glance, it may seem as if David's attitude here, is flippant, when we consider his words, while looking through a 21st century lens. It may seem like he is saying, "Well Zadok, you know what...just take the ark back. God will bring me back again, if He really cares. And if He doesn't, whatever...then so be it...etc." But that is far from what David is saying here. And actually, what he is saying, is highly commendable, and most exemplary, of how we all ought to respond to God's difficult providences. As David begins to ascend the Mount of Olives here, brethren, what he is actually saying here, is, in essence, "The Lord will take this cup from me, and if not, nevertheless, let His will be done." "He will bring me back to Jerusalem, and if for whatever reason, He does not do so; if He no longer delights in me; if He has determined to cast me aside, then let Him do as He pleases. His will is perfect, and not to be questioned, especially by me."

You see, brethren, what is happening here, is not David grumbling about his circumstances, and flippantly speaking, as if to be complaining about the cards, which he has been dealt. No, David is outwardly expressing, what he is keenly aware of, on the inside. David is casting himself wholly upon the mercy of God, because he recognizes that he is ultimately unworthy of any of God's acts of grace, kindness and mercy. He cannot obligate God unto any end. And if he were to attempt to do so, his sin would mar the whole assumption.

And brethren, here then is the great application for us. In our dealings with God; in our responses to difficult providences and harsh trials, let us never forget that we are never in a position to doubt or question God, as to His goodness, kindness, and most significantly, His fairness. It is too easy to ride upon the grace of God, for so long, that we forget that every breath, which we take, daily, is a breath taken in grace. When you are an object of constant grace, it can be very easy to take that for granted. And, if you are in Christ, this morning, that is exactly what you are. What we always deserve...is the worst, but God has given us the best...in Christ. And so, when the trials increase; when we are sent back into the wilderness for reshaping, and into the furnace for refining, we ought never to complain against God. Rather, like David, let us be keenly aware of our own unworthiness, and resign ourselves to the will of God. Whatever God does, He will only do what is right and best, at all times. He makes no mistakes...and we already have not gotten what we truly deserve.

David will, in fact, return to see the ark, and the place of God's manifest dwelling. You and I, will make it to the other side of our every trial, to behold the smile of God, once again. And all of this, is because Christ drank the great cup of wrath and displeasure for us. Remember those words, brethren; remember those mocking voices directed toward the crucified and dying Christ: "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matt. 27:43). You see, brethren, David never really had to question God's delight in him; we never have to question God's delight in us, because Christ drank the cup of wrath for us!" He was not delivered from the death of the cross, so that we can be certain that we will never bear the judgment, which our sins have incurred! All the more, brethren, let us be a people, who know our place, as creatures...and furthermore, as redeemed sinners! We can never complain, under any circumstances, can we? To do so, is to presume that, in some way, God has an obligation toward us. But, we are always unprofitable servants...at best! And the appropriate

words, which ought often to come from our lips, should be, "Even so, Father, do what is best in Your sight!"

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25