

# Uzzah and the Ark of God

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*Richard Owen Roberts discusses the biblical account of Uzzah and the Ark of God to highlight the importance of reverence in worship and the current decline of churches.*

**Duration:** 1:18:39

**Scripture:** Numbers 4:15, 2 Samuel 6:14, 1 Chronicles 15:13, 2 Chronicles 7:14

**Topics:** "Humility In Worship", "Revival And Repentance"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of doing things God's way and humbling ourselves before Him. It highlights the need for true preaching that moves hearts, not just teaching, and the significance of returning to the core truths of the Bible. The story of David dancing before the Lord in a linen ephod is used to illustrate the humility and obedience required in worship and leadership. The sermon also addresses the decline in churches, the lack of repentance, and the urgency for revival to bring nations back to God.

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## Transcript

This box kind of concerns me. In the course of a long life, one has many remarkable experiences. At one time I was pastor of a church in Fresno, California, with a most extraordinary name.

The Free Evangelical Lutheran Cross Church. It was not free. It was the only church I ever knew of that you actually had to pay dues to be a member.

The dues were \$25 a year. And as far as the people were concerned, they felt that that was the same as assurance of salvation. And at \$25, heaven was a bargain.

But they had just built a huge new, very expensive complex, and then they added an assessment to the dues for each family of \$175. So then the value of heaven naturally came under re-evaluation. Could it possibly be worth \$200? But nonetheless, there were 2,400 members and a constituency list of 5,000 families.

Had a big sign out front claiming Central California's largest church. Which was a gross exaggeration, but they believed it themselves. It was made up exclusively of Russian-German immigrants.

People who had come from Germany to Russia at the time of Catherine the Great were given many wonderful promises in Russia. Free land, no taxes, no military conscription, just a list of wonderful

benefits. And many of them were large-scale and prosperous farmers in Russia, the White River Volga region.

Then at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, they lost their privileges and multitudes of them fled, many of them settling here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and many of them settling in the rich agricultural regions of California and in the Dakotas and Minnesota to some extent. This happened to be the biggest of all of these churches. In Germany, they had been Lutherans.

In Russia, they considered themselves Lutherans. But when they came to this country or to the United States and Canada, they were not welcomed by the Lutheran groups. And in the States, they were actually given money to build buildings and to pay pastor's salaries by the congregational denomination.

So the name Free Evangelical Lutheran Cross Church was not free, as I've said. It was not Lutheran. It was congregational.

It was not evangelical. It had never been evangelical in all of its history. But they had a problem because they had had services in German through all the years, and some of the young people were very, very much in revolt about the German services.

And so they made the clever decision, bring in a preacher who can't speak German, and that'll give a blow to the German services. So I'm the guy they brought in. And believe me, I had a real time of it.

It was glorious. Every Sunday, I was preaching to vast numbers of people who knew absolutely nothing about the gospel, had never had any exposure to it, who honestly believed that their dues did entitle them to heaven. I wasn't joking when I said that.

They really, truly believed in it. During so-called Holy Week, I drove up to the church one morning. There was a large group of men on the sidewalk waiting for me.

When I got out of the car, they said to me, What did you do with the body? What? What did you do with the body? I don't have any idea what you're talking about. What did you do with the body? Well, all I could think of with 5,000 families would probably average around 25 funerals a week. I didn't have to preside at most of them, but I thought, well, if somehow I go to the funeral home and then forget to go to the cemetery.

You know, my mind is racing trying to figure this out. Men had become really stern. You, tell us what you did with the body, or we're going to call the sheriff.

Well, I don't have the foggiest notion what they're talking about, so I asked them to step aside and I go into my office. Well, then later I discovered this was Thursday, a so-called Holy Week, and on Sunday morning I went into the sanctuary before the service, just to be sure everything was in order, and somebody had whispered to me they thought that all this commotion had to do with the crucifix. They had this very ornate Russian type of an altar, Russian orthodox, and there was a crucifix on this altar.

So I go in Sunday morning, and there the body is back on the cross. Well, I think that's interesting, but don't think anything of it. So I go out, and then time for service, I come back in, there's the cross without the body.

So I'm really perplexed as to what's going on. Anyway, I'm finally coming to my point about the box. I ask, well, what's going on here? Well, one of the deacons acknowledges that somebody stole the body.

He thought it was you, but apparently it wasn't. And then it reappeared, but there are wingnuts on the back of the thing that holds the body on the cross. And the body was back on the cross, but the wingnuts were missing.

So the deacons have a conference, and they say, the way that wild man thunders around in the pulpit, he is bound to knock the body off the cross. And seeing the box there, I thought, good night, the way the old man thunders around in the pulpit, even though we don't have one here. Maybe he'll step on the box and fall and crack his skull or who knows what and don't want to make you dear folks responsible for that.

Anyways, it turned out what actually happened was I had started, for the first time in their history, a Sunday evening meeting, and it was a Bible class, really, and there were hundreds of people who had never studied the Bible coming to this class. And always gave wonderful opportunity for questions or even for controversy if they wanted to contradict something I had said or done. And one night somebody asked, why is it that Protestants don't have a crucifix? And I had explained the issues.

So the president of the congregation had snuck in one night, taken the body off the cross. Not knowing that I would be blamed for it. And it was quite an episode.

Now that's a wild, crazy kind of a church. But it's a church in decline. It had been in decline for decades until they invited me, and not me, but the preaching of the gospel.

And the attendance began to get bigger and bigger, and the interest mounted up tremendously. Then, so much controversy, they managed to remove me, and it's gone back into decline. So that big church is down to a couple hundred people now and may not survive.

And all across both our nations, there are churches that have always been no good and are still that way. There are churches that have been truly splendid spiritually, and they're in grievous decline. And essentially, with an occasional happy exception, the only churches that are prospering numerically are those that don't tell the truth.

If you want to grow a church, just be like a politician and say what the people want to hear. And what do we do in a time like this, when the truth is not merely hated by multitudes, but we've been at this wrong approach for so long, many don't even know what the truth is. They haven't the faintest idea what constitutes the gospel.

Charles, in talking about the prison situation, I've been quite astonished myself. I did a little jail ministry as a youth and then never had any thought whatsoever of any kind of prison ministry, but I've been five times in the last 12 months, three times at this big Angola prison, three times at one of the big Arkansas state prisons. I've heard people say over the last two or three years, the next revival is likely to start in prison.

Think of that. And naturally if you hear that and you think there might be some possible truth to it, you want to ask the question, why? And what appears to be the obvious answer? Those men have nowhere to turn. But Christ, He is their only hope.

Angola prison has 5,100 prisoners, 85% of whom are there on life sentence, and as Charles has explained, in Louisiana, no parole, no shortening of the sentence under any circumstance whatsoever. For

the first 10 years or so of a man's imprisonment in Angola, he's locked in a cell for 23 and a half hours each day. He has half an hour to walk around a small, highly fenced enclosure.

Where does a man turn? One of these dear men, the one who preached last, said to me on Friday morning, my first nine years I was locked in the cell 23 and a half hours. I had nothing whatsoever to do. There was a Bible in the cell.

I began to read it, and soon I was consumed with interest and desire to know the Christ of the Bible. Then eventually I was made a trustee and placed in a dormitory. But I don't have time now for God.

He said to me, we have between 15 and 20 religious organizations that come here. As prisoners, we are used to being told what to do, and we don't have any choice. When the administration or God says do this, we have to do it.

Now he said all these religious organizations are here. They all come. They tell us what to do.

And it's awfully hard to figure out when you can say no and when you can't. He said the best thing that could happen to us here in Angola is to eliminate most of these religious ministries because they aren't doing us any good. They're a great deal of harm.

But Malachi does. That's something else. That's strictly Bible.

That's what we need. Well, I mention these things because it seems to me we've got, in any burden for revival, we've got to ask the question what is at the heart of the difficulty that we're faced with. I mean, I have personally been preaching for 67 years.

There was a little season when it looked as if maybe things were starting to turn back toward God. But I would say for the last 10 years, I haven't seen any indication whatsoever of a spirit of repentance permeating the organized churches. The brightest ray of which I am personally familiar is that of which Charles has spoken, what is taking place in prisons.

This last week, I was nearly hugged to death. And a lot of these fellows, so 85% of the population of that prison are black. And many of them are very sturdy guys.

And when they give you a hug, you know you've been hugged. And it's genuine. Some of them even kissed me on the cheek.

Oh, we're so grateful that you keep coming and preaching the word of God to us. You rarely have anybody even thank you these days in the church and make stupid statements like, oh, that was interesting. I'll have to think about that.

But in terms of deep appreciation, oh, we do see some, thank God, but nothing like what's taking place in the prison. So I've suggested we really have got to ask, what is the foundational issue that has made the church an utterly ridiculous mess? The church is less effective with every passing year than it was the year before. And as I said, with that brief season when things seem to be turning upward, I would have to say during my lifetime of ministry, it has been virtually an entire time of moral and spiritual decline in the church.

And no sign that I see of anything really truly changing. Now, don't misunderstand. I'm not being pessimistic.

I'm full of hope. Often people say to me, how long have you been doing this? And when I tell them, don't you get discouraged? No, I don't get discouraged because I keep my eyes fixed on Christ. He's not failing, even though the church is.

So what I would like to do to begin my part of this time is to take a passage of scripture, probably very familiar to most of you, but that emphasizes the two critical issues that I see in the church that must be very, very carefully faced. This is a passage out of the Old Testament, one, as I said, but most of you could speak upon even more seriously and beneficially than I can. But I want to read it and to focus upon it this evening.

I'm speaking of 2 Samuel, chapter 6. I'll give you a moment to turn there, and I'll read through the chapter. And before doing so, simply remind you what you doubtless know already. This is the shortened version.

The more extended version is in 1 Chronicles. Basically, in 1 Chronicles, five chapters are in some way related to this single chapter in 2 Samuel 6. So let me read from verse 1. Now David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baal Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God, which is called by the name, the very name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned above the cherubim.

And they placed the Ark of God on a new cart that they might bring it from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were leading the new cart. So they brought it with the Ark of God from the house of Abinadab which was on the hill.

And Ahio was walking ahead of the Ark. Meanwhile, David and all the house of Israel were celebrating before the Lord with all kinds of instruments made of firwood and with lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals. But when they came to the threshing floor of Nachon, Uzzah reached out toward the Ark of God and took hold of it for the oxen nearly upset it.

And the anger of the Lord burned against Uzzah. And God struck him down there for his irreverence. And he died there by the Ark of God.

And David became angry because of the Lord's outburst against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-Uzzah to this day. So David was afraid of the Lord that day.

And he said, How can the Ark of the Lord come to me? And David was unwilling to move the Ark of the Lord into the city of David with him. But David took it aside to the house of Obed-Etham the Gittite. Thus the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Etham the Gittite three months.

And the Lord blessed Obed-Etham and all his household. Now it was told King David, saying, The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Etham and all that belongs to him on account of the Ark of God. And David went, and he brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Etham into the city of David with gladness.

And so it was that when the bearers of the Ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. And David was dancing before the Lord with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephah.

So David and all the house of Israel were bringing up the Ark of the Lord with shouting and the sound of the trumpet. Then it happened. As the Ark of the Lord came into the city of David, it was Saul, the daughter of Saul, looked out the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord.

And she despised him in her heart. So they brought in the Ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it. And David offered burnt offerings which David... Excuse me.

David offered burnt offerings and the peace offerings. He blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. Further, he distributed to all the people, to the multitudes of Israel, both to men and women, a cake of bread and one of dates and one of raisins to each one.

Then all the people departed each to his house. But when David had returned to bless his household, Michelle, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, and you can almost hear the loathing in her words, almost as if she's snarling, How the King of Israel distinguished himself today! He uncovered himself today in the eyes of his servant's maids as one of the foolish one shamelessly uncovers himself. So David said to Michelle, It was before the Lord who chose me above your father and above all his house to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel.

Therefore I will celebrate before the Lord and I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished. And Michelle, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death. Quite a few years ago, when my parents were still alive, they lived in upstate New York, the only member of our extended family of any wealth purchased a condominium in Jupiter, Florida and turned the keys over to my parents and insisted that they spend the winters in Florida.

In the middle of the winter, my dad called and he said, Mama, I earned Jupiter, we want you to bring the family and come and spend the week with us. Oh, I said, Dad, that sounds wonderful, but impossible. The schedule is much too heavy to even think of such a thing.

He said, I have given you an order, which he seldom did, but when he did, it was no fooling around. Well, I said, Dad, I don't know how, but we'll work it out. So when I told my wife Maggie, she said, well, let's go over the calendar.

Well, she said, you're finishing in this church on Friday night and you don't start in the next place until Sunday, a week later. You could fly from where you finish that meeting to Jupiter. I can come with the kids and drive down, meet you at the airport, and we can spend a few days with the folks and then you can go to your next meeting and I'll drive back home.

So we decided to do that. On Saturday night, my aged father said to me, Dick, Mom and I have been attending First Baptist Church in Jupiter. We'd like you to go with us, but still you're free to do whatever you think best.

Oh, I said, Dad, we'll be delighted to go with you and Mom. We went to First Baptist Church. The pastor read this chapter and when he finished reading, he said to the congregation, I do not understand this chapter.

Then he proceeded to preach a sermon in which he proved he didn't understand it. As we were leaving, my dad turned to me as we were walking along the sidewalk toward the car. I don't understand that chapter either.

Well, I thought that was an excellent time to keep my mouth shut. So I made no reply. We went a few more steps and he turned again.

He said, Do you? Yes, Dad, I said, I do. Good. When we get back to the condo, you and I are going to sit down and you're going to explain it to me.

And the explanation I gave my dad I want to give you tonight. But strangely, just a very few weeks later, when I was home for a few days, my wife committed what might almost be regarded as the unpardonable sin. At that time, we lived in a very long home.

She had her study on one end. I had mine on the other. We had this unwritten rule.

I get up early, leave the bedroom, go to my study, don't wish to see her until I have seen the Lord. And that had been respected for years. But suddenly, one morning, at about five, she comes storming into my study, wagging her fist and saying to me, If you ever do what David did, you're going to be in as much trouble with me as David was with his wife.

I said, Maggie, whatever are you talking about? She said, I know you, I know how worked up you get, how excited and passionate you become over the Scriptures. I'm warning you, if you ever do what David did, you're in great trouble with me. Yeah, but I said, in your mind, what awful thing did David do? Why, he danced naked in the street.

I said, I believe you have misread the passage. Suppose you go back to your end of the house and reread the chapter. When we come to breakfast together, we'll discuss what you have found.

And what my wife and I have discussed, I'd like to discuss with you tonight. There are two great issues. The Florida pastor missed the first great issue, and my wife missed the second great issue.

Most of us understand that the Ark of the Covenant had been taken by the Philistines at the time Eli was priest. And we know sufficient about Eli, we know that he rebuked his godless sons for their wicked conduct, but we also know Eli was grossly overweight. And he sat on a stool because apparently his feet and his legs could not support the monster-sized body that he had grown.

And we know that although he said to his sons, naughty, naughty, naughty, you should not have done that. Hey, that's a mighty nice looking piece of meat. I'll have a chunk of that.

We know that he was gouging himself on the fruits of their wickedness. And nothing like a lot of parents today who rebuke their children for conduct that they themselves are perpetually guilty of. And perhaps some of you have thought through the simple fact that the Ark of the Covenant was missing from its rightful place not for just a little dab of time, but an estimated 62 years.

Twenty years while Samuel was presiding over the nation, 32 years while Saul was king, and an estimated 10 years into David's time as king when the incident of which we read took place. Now just think in terms of the Ark of the Covenant being absent from its rightful place for 62 years. I know that you could not wisely relate the Ark of the Covenant and the communion table as if they were one and the same.

But I think in terms of representation it is safe to say. Imagine a church where the communion was absent for 62 years. Now granted it's so abused in some settings that the church would be better off without it.

But nonetheless, the consequence of both the Ark and the communion table are such that when you think in terms of total absence for such an extended period of time it becomes truly a very critical issue. Now what was perplexing the Florida pastor and what was perplexing my dear father had more to do with the

death of the farm boy who reached up to study the Ark when it reached that rough place in the road and looked as if it might topple off the cart. But of course their focus on that was an unnecessary and an unwise focus.

My dad was very explicit in saying I don't understand why God killed that boy. But we know that God is pretty explicit about conduct and especially conduct relating to worship and sacred things. I remember the first time ever in my life that I read from Numbers chapter 4. Perhaps you'll take a moment to turn there and let me draw this passage to your attention.

Numbers chapter 4. I'm mentioning now the first time I ever remember reading this passage publicly. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron saying take a census of the descendants of Kohath from among the sons of Levi by their families, by their fathers' households from 30 years and upward even to 50 years old all who enter the service to do the work of the tent of meeting. This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting concerning the most holy things.

When the camp sets out Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue and shall insert its poles over the table of the bread of the presence. They shall also spread a cloth of blue and put on it the dishes and the spoons and the sacrificial bowls and the jars for the libation and the continual bread shall be on it and they shall spread over them a cloth of scarlet material and cover the same with the covering of dolphin skin and they shall insert its poles and they shall take a blue cloth and cover the lampstand for the light along with its lamps and its snappers and its trays and its oil vessels by which they serve it and they shall put it and all the utensils in a covering of dolphin skin.

I got about that far in the first public reading I ever made of this passage and inwardly I said to myself what a lot of picky detail and immediately like that I understood 2nd Samuel 6 the church hates the picky details that God gives and the general sense is oh they don't matter all those little things just get these big things right but when you're careless about the little things you soon become careless even about the big things we are living in a time when the church at large doesn't think it necessary to obey God in everything and we know if God is big enough to be worshipped He's big enough to be worshipped the way He requires worship He's big enough to determine when worship is acceptable where worship must take place who has the right to worship Him within all these areas the

church shrugs its shoulders and says oh so what we don't feel constrained in anything it appears in terms of worship I wonder has it occurred to you that during this season of gross moral and spiritual decline virtually every issue of any consequence has been brought to the table for reconsideration by the church the place of women in ministry as an illustration acceptable and unacceptable sex the place of music everything put on the table for reconsideration and virtually everything decided by a major portion of the church in a fashion contrary to God's interest and concern so bad has been all of this that some of us have come to be frequently saying to people when you are in moral and spiritual decline don't reconsider any issue just get back to God get right with Him stop monkeying

around with all the details virtually nobody is listening to us when we speak that way but what an incredible thing but at a time when we weren't even smart enough to get our own personal lives straight we are rethinking the whole place of the church and all doctrine and practice under reconsideration at this time when we ought not for a moment to be re-deciding any issue of any consequence at all it seems to me the

first great point of this chapter is simply in this fourth chapter of Numbers that makes it crystal clear how the Ark of the Covenant is to be moved now I suppose it would be stretching it a bit to say that when David decided to bring the Ark home to his city he went and asked the Philistines how to do it now I don't mean by that that he actually literally asked them but where

did they get this idea of moving it on a new cart they certainly didn't get it from scripture it was the way the Philistines moved it so while as I said it might be stretching it a little they literally asked the Philistines nonetheless they copied the Philistines and isn't that exactly what the bulk of the church is doing these days so to speak asking the world how would you do it if you were in charge and so time after time after time things have been altered because the world said oh that won't work oh no you don't want to do that and in consequence we get further and further and further away from the core of truth that God has given us now my dad and the pastor of whom I've spoken were really concerned why did God strike this young fellow dead now I think the answer is quite plain I'm

not really sure why anybody at all struggles with it but the morning or afternoon really when my dad and I sat down together to discuss it I said to him dad what if God had put David to death my dad was a godly man a very earnest man totally uneducated went through the 6th grade but a thinking man and a great lover of scripture and he said well Dick I've been working on that trying to get a hold of that and he and I discussed together the righteous judgments of God would it be safe to conclude that the person who always receives the direct blow when God judges is the person most guilty now I mean here we have an obvious example who is really guilty on this occasion who should have been struck dead maybe in Canada you don't hear sayings like this but one of the sayings that has been common

in the states for a long time if you throw stones at a pack of dogs wild dogs the dog that yelps is the dog that got hit not exactly biblical theology but nonetheless a statement of consequence who's doing the yelping in this passage who calls the place Perez Aza who says God made a breach between us well obviously David now it's interesting in the parallel passage to which I made reference earlier 1 Chronicles and especially chapter 15 verse 13 in summary statement David says you didn't do it right at the first well frankly I think David was responsible I mean he was the man most in tune with God he should have said I have no new cart only on the shoulders of the Kohai but nothing is gained by trying to pinpoint blame that's not really even my purpose my purpose is simply to say that

when things get way, way away from where they're supposed to be anybody and everybody can be as guilty as the next the records indicate that he took upwards of 30,000 men with him down to reclaim the ark and bring it home isn't it remarkable that out of 30 some thousand men not one of them raised their voice and said stop, stop we're not doing this God's way but that's our situation today who do you hear crying at the top of their lungs stop to me one of the saddest things that I can think of is that by and large the men who have the ear of the nation don't have the heart of God we take the big name preachers the well-known, the highly respected and I'm not throwing stones at them but which of the highly known preachers on our continent is expressing the heart of God oh there are a few

fellows here and there like voices crying in the wilderness but I don't know a prominent man anywhere who is crying for the nation to turn back to God who is pleading profoundly for repentance now in regard to why did God strike the young fellow and not David well obviously David was the one through whom the Savior would come he was a mandatory part of the plan and purpose of God I don't think there's any question that God has a right to do anything he pleases and if he pleases to spare the most guilty and he punishes in death a lesser person like I'm personally confident God has that right what was done was

wrong everybody involved was wrong all of them could be struck dead but God very often visits final judgment upon a handful and spares the larger portion even sometimes the most

guilty portion and who in our day could possibly argue that if God wiped out our two countries in total he would be utterly just in doing so I can't think of one single reason why God should spare the United States it seems to me we've had more than ample opportunity to get right with God we have violated everything that we know to be right at one time I know that many object to this but at one time those early people in the states honestly believed they were creating the new Israel men like the Mathers and all that wonderful band of holy men in the early colonies they believed that they were acting under God's leadership to establish the new Israel that would be in covenant relationship with God now no matter how many people deny that a few of you perhaps know that if I'm distinguished

for anything it is that I have an incredible library and in that library countless numbers of books and pamphlets from the 1500s and the 1600s and the 1700s where time after time what I have just said was verified in print this may not be of much interest to Canadians but it won't harm you to hear this from me in the United States of America every single year there were preached and published solemn assembly sermons I have vast numbers of the original myself we had three great areas of Christian literature beyond the normal the fast day sermons the solemn assembly sermons the election day sermons every election powerful sermons preached to guide the people in terms of how to vote and thanksgiving day sermons those three realms of literature and time after time in this literature the

people were reminded this is a nation in covenant relationship with God we are in danger of violating our covenant these are the things of which we must immediately repent but now most of our professed Christian leaders aren't even aware of that part of our history and if they were aware they wouldn't be likely to preach a sermon that demanded that everybody in the nation lay aside a day of fasting and praying and seeking God's faith well my point I trust is clear this passage with David is a profound example that when we call ourselves Christians all our options are limited to doing what God says the way God says it's to be done and whenever we veer even slightly from that then our only hope is to return to the Lord and His word now let me just interject what I personally feel deeply

concerning I don't think it's too late for our nations I know it is late I'm not denying that I don't believe it's too late and the greatest burden of my heart is that God will raise up a band of mighty men of God who will preach the true message of the gospel and call our nations back to God and that's why revival ministry is so urgent and necessary because by the grace of God we have been given insight into the heart of God I expect revivalists above all others have a sensitivity to God's heart I know personally that I believe that the way to prepare to preach is to discover what's on God's heart and to proclaim it I don't pretend that I always succeed in that but I do believe that what we're dealing with today in most pulpits has very little if anything to do with the heart of God I

think men get up in the pulpit and say what they think people need to hear or what they want to hear and very few seek God to discover what he wants said but what a splendid opportunity is before us to do everything in our power possible to stir men up to real preaching if I may include a reference to an incident from a long time ago my wife and I have always been tent makers basically we have earned our own way from the beginning we operate some substantial book businesses and up until the last couple of years they have been our support now of course the whole world of books is turned downward so that's no longer an effective way to earn a living but because of that I have had contact over the years with most of the major theological booksellers for years and years and years I would make

at least one often two trips to the United Kingdom to buy books and have bought them by the tens of thousands I had a particularly close relationship with a man in England who operated the top level theological book company in that country he was not a Christian didn't attend any church I tried innumerable times to speak to him about spiritual things never with any success but one day right out of the blue he called me and said I've decided to come to America I'd like to stay with you and your wife for a few days oh I thought hallelujah at last so when I picked him up at the airport in Chicago he said to me let me tell you the purpose of my trip he said I have come specifically because I want to listen to some of your famous preachers I almost fell over he had always been so disinterested

it seemed now he's telling me that's the major purpose of his trip so he spends a few days with us but I discover he's no more open to hearing from me than he had been before and then he goes on his way maybe a month after he was with us I had an appointment with him in his place in England so we sat down at the supper table and he was a large man with huge fist and I said to him tell me about your visit to America and especially the preaching that you came specifically to hear he balled up his fist and gave the table a mighty walk so that all the dishware just simply leapt up in the air and he said to me I never heard a single sermon and I said what happened? were you sick? were you unable to keep your itinerary? oh no I went to every place I intended to go I never heard a single sermon

you don't have preachers in America all you've got is teachers so naively I said to him in your estimate what's the difference between teaching and preaching? wow did that rile him the next time he walloped the table I mean he almost smashed it into the floor he said this is not a matter of personal opinion it is an established fact to teach is to inform to preach is to move I never was moved in any way by anything I heard from your famous so called preachers they don't know how to preach now that's not far off most of what goes in the name of preaching is not preaching at all nobody is moved and I believe God has called us into a revival burden in order somehow to impact that incredible issue of men who think that teaching is the same as preaching now not everybody likes to be told that

they're wrong perhaps nobody really likes it when everything is said and done Paul said preach the word be instant in season out of season at one of these heart cry conferences one year I felt strongly I needed to speak on that passage and I asked this question how do you know whether you have preached the word or are preaching from the word or about the word and there can be a huge difference how do you know and I said well what does the word say about itself the word is a fire the word is a hammer that smashes the rock to pieces the word is a sharp two edged sword dividing soul and spirit of thunder piercing if when I preach nobody is smashed no fires are lit no swords piercing it's not preaching the word but I say again I believe there is an incredible opportunity before us to

earnestly purposely rouse the church to the point where it's tired of the cliches and tired of the teaching now I'm not against teaching I'm just saying teaching is not preaching and God didn't promise to save the world by teaching and I think it's fabulous what Canadian Revival Fellowship might get to to stir up preaching and to get multitudes directed again in that fashion the heart of what I've simply said is doing things approximately right is no good doing things exactly as God commands that's the issue the second issue of which I've spoken the issue that concerned my wife this idea that she gained somehow in carelessly reading the scripture that David had danced naked now the text when she came back to the breakfast table she just very honestly said alright I confess I misread it I

see that the text says he danced in a linen ephod but I still don't get it now what's the issue very interestingly when Charles and I and others were at the prison this past week the warden has a special

house in which he entertains guests and I've been treated wonderfully by the warden on the times that I've been there he was out of the country this time and an associate warden was there and the associate warden got in conversation with me and he said to me my wife is a very religious person too religious in fact I can't stand her on a regular basis he said we've got an arrangement she teaches and he named a place and I work here he said five days a week we don't have to face one another and I can tolerate her for the two days of the weekend but then he told me I don't understand the

bible and I don't like it he's described as a man after God's own heart now what kind of a man is he why he was a murderer he was an adulterer I can't I can't believe the bible it's full of nonsense and contradiction oh you really think so yes now look I said you're not an idiot God gave you a brain why not try using it what was there about David that was appealing to God I said you seem to know a lot about the bible do you remember the incident in which Saul was commanded to go and utterly destroy the Amalekites and instead he spared alive the best of the sheep and the goats and he spared Agag the king yeah he said I remember that well I said what did David do that Saul would not teach me I don't have any idea well I said let me rehearse this with you when David danced in a linen ephod

in the street his wife was in a terrible rage she denounced him what was she in a rage about I don't know I said let me quote this to you David said to Meshua it was before the Lord who chose me above your father and above all his house to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord over Israel therefore I will celebrate before the Lord what did David do that Saul would not he said you better tell me I said David did what you won't do David did what Saul won't do David took off his crown shed his royal robe danced in the street as a common man among common men in a linen ephod Saul would not humble himself when confronted by Samuel Saul said I have sinned but then he added the people make it good when Samuel turned to walk away from Saul Saul reached out and grabbed hold of his garment

and Saul kept walking and the garment tore and then Samuel turned back and said God has rent the kingdom from you and given it to a neighbor better than yourself I asked the associate warden why was David better than Saul he said I don't know I said David humbled himself before God that's what makes a man after God's own heart not the fact that he never sins colossal sins but when confronted he humbles himself my dear brothers and sisters that I believe is the second great issue in the church we're doing virtually everything wrong we cancel the Sunday evening service in most churches the prayer meeting is a ridiculous joke if it still exists and of course in most churches it doesn't exist at all but imagine now I have pastors who regularly jokingly refer to the prayer meeting in their

church as the organ recital and they say we have a church of 700 people we have 11 people who sometimes attend the prayer meeting and the focus of the prayer meeting is please pray for so and so who fell and broke their arm or is having exploratory surgery or somehow it's all related to organ and all of us know deep down that it's God who afflicts our organs it's God who brings sickness upon us isn't it tragic that the little praying that a church does focuses upon asking God to defeat his own purposes God sends sickness in order to alarm and awaken a person and the church immediately wants to band together to pray that God will deliver the person from the very thing God sent for their eternal death and I've said multitudes of times lately if you're going to pray at all about a person

who's suffering what you ought to pray is that they do not recover from their sickness or do not gain a job or whatever the affliction is that they remain in the affliction until they've learned what God intended them to learn from it but it's rare that anybody thinks in that direction at all I believe there are two great issues that are plaguing the church and have brought us down to its lowest level the fact that we do not do things

God's way and the fact that we will not bend and will not humble ourselves before God now I don't know how much longer the Lord intends for me to keep going but I'll tell you very candidly I don't intend to quit as long as anybody's willing to listen I'm willing to do what I can and the great focus that I believe is necessary is to say let's get back to the

Word and to only what God says and let's humble ourselves when people ask for an explanation of what's happening in the prisons of America the obvious solution the answer to their question is the prisoners have hit the bottom they've nowhere to turn but to God and I believe when the church refuses to turn in any direction but God that something wonderful will happen so those of you who have committed your lives to these very principles I simply hope that maybe tonight I could encourage you from a different perspective to move on more zealously more earnestly, more faithfully than ever before we hear some preaching on 2 Chronicles 7-14 but that preaching is usually focused on prayer but what an absurd thing to think that the prayers of an arrogant person mean anything to God surely we have

to start with if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and I believe part of the humiliation that's mandatory is that we review absolutely everything we're doing and ask is it really in keeping with God's Word is it truly what he himself wants

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/8Znggww67rM.mp4>

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