

The Ark of the Covenant: In Dagon's Temple

Part IV

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in God rather than in formulas or symbols, and the need for recognizing and judging sin in order to please God and become a holy people.

Duration: 45:52

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-14

Topics: "Ark Of The Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of true freedom and victory in the Christian life. He warns against relying on formulas and rituals as substitutes for genuine repentance and surrender to God. The preacher then shares the story of the Ark in Dagon's Temple from the book of Samuel, highlighting how the Israelites' misplaced confidence in the Ark led to their defeat by the Philistines. He emphasizes the need for a right attitude and genuine humility before God, rather than relying on external symbols or strategies.

Transcript

We come now this morning to the extraordinary story of the Ark in Dagon's Temple. Normally, it were to be in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle, with the glory of the Lord upon it. But we now see that Ark, if you please, placed in a heathen temple.

How it got there, and what happened when it did get there, we're going to read in the first book of Samuel, chapter 4. The first book of Samuel, chapter 4. And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel.

And when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines. And they slew of the army in the field about 4,000 men. And when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines.

And they slew of the army in the field about 4,000 men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people said to Shiloh that they might bring from thence the Ark of the

Covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims.

And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. And when the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the Ark of the Lord was come into the camp.

And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us, for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us, who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues of the wilderness.

Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Quit yourselves like men, and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten.

And they fed every man into his tent. And there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. The casualties in the Old Testament, and we must take these numbers literally, were far greater than the casualties in modern war.

Save, of course, when the atomic bomb is used. Interesting that, isn't it? And the Ark of God was taken. Can you believe it? And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

When the Philistines took the Ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when day of Ashdod arose early on the morning, 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.

And when day of Ashdod arose early on the 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.

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. But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emeralds, or with tumours, even Ashdod and the coast thereof. And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The Ark of God of Israel shall not abide with us, for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our God.

And 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 the answer, Let the Ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the Ark of God of Israel about thither. 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, plagues I imagine, and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emeralds, or tumours, in their secret hearts.

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. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and they said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and let it go 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, and the men that died not were smitten with tumours. And the cry of the city went up to heaven.

It was a terrible day for Israel. When the Ark of God was taken. Eli, the old high priest, had permitted the Ark to be taken into battle with some misgivings.

And all the time the battle was engaged, it says, his heart trembled for the Ark. And when the news came, that there had been this great discomfiture of Israel, and worst of all, the Ark of God was taken, that which had been Israel's glory, the old man fell off his seat backwards, broke his neck, and died. Just about that time his daughter-in-law was giving birth to a son.

And she heard the news that the Ark of God was taken, just as the baby was born. And she gave that baby a very significant name, Ichabod. The glory is departed.

That really was a sad, ignominious day for Israel. How and why did it happen that God permitted the Ark of His covenant with His people to be taken by the Philistines? Well, there was first of all an initial grave defeat of Israel by the Philistines. And then they got together after that defeat and said, wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the Ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh, which was where the tabernacle was pitched when they got into the Promised Land, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

Said somebody, I remember. Don't you remember, Jericho? We brought the Ark right into the midst of the battle. We encompassed the city.

Let's try that again. And so they sought to repeat what had happened before. And it's interesting that it says that when it cometh, it may save us.

I want to tell you, there's no power in an it. I've tried it before, the Christian life, whatever it is, and it didn't work. Of course, it didn't work.

It never does. You may have various forms of it. And you can be subtly trusting in that it.

And you're always riding for a fall when I'm trusting in a it, a repetition of what happened before and what I did before. These people were trusting in the Ark of the Lord instead of the Lord of the Ark. That was only a symbol.

Well, this is an ever-present tendency with us. When there's been trouble, when things haven't gone right, how easy to remember how it was before, what you did before, how God seemed to work. And we have in our minds a formula based on how we were blessed before, how we were blessed at Southwold, maybe.

And we've only got to do it this way and that way and repent as they told us there and give our testimonies in that way or do this, that and the other and it will save us. It may not be of that order at all. There's so many it's.

Sometimes a church has got its back to the wall and they hear a wonderful way of outreach and evangelism. That's going to be the answer. We'll apply that.

We'll go to that seminar, get trained and it will change everything in our church. And so often it's a disappointment. It's never do.

Either for us individually or for our churches. We hear how somebody's got a wonderful scheme of Bible reading. That's it.

That's why I'm so dull. I'll take on that. It's an it.

And we're trusting in the formula of the Lord rather than the Lord of the formula. When you were blessed, when things happened in another place, but it wasn't red because of that it. The eyes were to the Lord.

And he showed them. There you are. Do that.

Just think of how they could have made a formula. Gideon could have. How they overcame.

It was a wonderful thing. Very good. It was so calculated to produce the desired effect.

Surrounding the camp with only 300 men and each with torches hidden in pitchers and then breaking them all together, blowing a trumpet and all over the place the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. You know, they could use it. That's a good idea.

We'll do that again. Would they have written for a formula? Would they have come down? Why, that was a futile thing to do. It was part of the originality of deity to tell them to do that.

And because God told them to do it and it was his way, we can go on thinking that's going to be the way the next time. I can only suggest we keep our ears and eyes open to spot the it which we may be turning to. It ill befits me to go into any details because there is human cooperation with God.

But it's where your confidence is. And so often he tells you to do something, you say well that's a mad thing to do but we'll do it. You're not trusting that but in the God who told you to do it.

So only God can show you the line that divides right cooperation with God based on faith and a wrong cooperation based on trusting in our own arm or the arm of an it. But there was something else that was wrong on this occasion. There was sin, grievous sin in the nation and it had been largely unjudged.

It began first of all with Hophni and Phinehas, the priest's two sons. And they'd been in the habit of taking and grabbing more than was right of their share of the sacrifices. There was a portion of the sacrifices, certain sacrifice that were reserved for the priests but they were going beyond and taking that part that wasn't for them but for the Lord and forcing the people to give them in excess of what was right so that men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

It came into disrepute. More than that, they were immoral men and they were lying with the women sexually who came to the door of the tabernacle. Eli too was at fault.

In a feeble way he tried to say something about it but God's verdict about Eli's behavior was your sons made themselves vile and you restrained them not. And then the people too had largely departed from the Lord. And so along with trust in the formula there was unrecognized, unjudged sin in their midst.

And so often these two go together. Almost always. Not only am I trusting in it but I'm permitting unjudged sin to remain in my life.

There are things that aren't right with me or in our church or we're undertaking this wonderful new it but how many things are wrong in that church, in relationships there and in other matters and not only in the

church but with us individually. And of course it's much easier to resort to a formula to do what we've done before because that doesn't involve us in deep dealing with God about sin. Indeed these wretched it's are so often in effect a substitute for getting right with God of humbling ourselves before Him and finding Him a God of grace that those are honest with Him about sin.

Oh yes, they're substitutes for that. Little wonder that God allowed them even when the ark came to be defeated. At first it looked as if it was going to work everybody was shouting and the Philistines were afraid.

It's working boys, I told you so. Wait a minute. When it came to the crops it didn't.

At first however it did seem as if their attitudes were going to be right. You get quite excited. After that first defeat they get together and they say Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines? What an excellent thing to say.

If only they'd stopped there. Now that is the thing to say. Why has God allowed us to be compounded before the enemy? Why have things gone wrong? Why are we getting nowhere? And if you stop there God will tell you why.

It's a dangerous thing to ask Him. Why am I so dry? Why am I so down? Why? Ask Him why. Then don't stop thinking of your own way out.

And there would have been a prophet sent to them to tell them wherefore the Lord had allowed them to be smitten by the Philistines. But they didn't do that. They went on to say Ah, let's try the Ark.

With the results we know. There's a very lovely contrast to this incident of fetching the Ark to help them in the battle while they were still in impenitence. And that relates.

That is an incident of the life of David when he was fleeing from before Absalom. He and his faithful men and the priests were with him. And what they said if the rightful king is going let's take the Ark with us.

It's a symbol of God's presence and God is surely on David's side against Absalom. And dear old David, bless his darling heart. And the king said unto Zadok carry back the Ark of God into the city.

If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord he will bring me again and will show me both it and his habitation. But if he say thus I have no delight in thee. Behold, here I am.

Let him do to me a seabed good unto thee. For your reference, it's in 2 Samuel 15. If you want to note it down.

2 Samuel 15. Isn't that beautiful? Don't you love that man? Could God resist a man like that? His trust wasn't in the Ark of the Lord but in a God of grace. It may be he'll show me grace.

Because although Absalom was so wrong David recognized this as part of the prophesied discipline upon him because of his own sin. They'd been forgiven completely. But there was nonetheless discipline that was going to be good, good for David.

And he submitted to it. He didn't want to try and prove to the world God was on his side. God will do that.

Not so these people. Let us send for the Ark that it may save us. And so it was.

This wonderful symbol this holy symbol that speaks of so much of divine things as we've seen was taken by the Philistines into captivity. Psalm 78, 60 the Psalms have wonderful references to Old Testament incidents. Always read them because they're put in a very succinct way and give you extra light upon an Old Testament incident.

It says there in Psalm 78 So God forsook the tabernacle at Shiloh and delivered his strength into captivity his glory into the hands of the enemies. It would seem that God suffered grave dishonor in the process. That his name was besmirched.

But God said I'm prepared for that. One thing I'm going to have and that's a holy people. And if chastening them and allowing my Ark to be taken captive seems to show my honor has been besmirched I'm going to let that happen at all costs.

I'm going to have a holy people. And we find that God knew how to look after his honor even when the Ark was taken. We have the extraordinary picture of the Ark of the Covenant powerless in Israel.

God's people but mighty among the Philistines. What a story it is. And you know God is intent to have a holy people.

And he's intent to let things go wrong and discipline his people. He's quite prepared to let the scandal come out. And for things to go all around the town.

All the shame of dishonor has been brought upon the name of the Lord because of this thing. He said I'm prepared for that. I'm not going to hush it up.

I must discipline my people and have a holy people. And I know how to look after my own honor. And so it is sometimes the Lord Jesus Christ seems utterly powerless among his people.

They seem to be without him. Nothing's happening in that church. It's utterly formal.

Things have gone wrong. But at the same time that mighty Lord Jesus is mighty in the world. And someone has a little group or something in a house and this one gets saved and that one gets saved.

Great whopping conversions right out of the world. Oh yes. You didn't fear to him.

He'll look after his name. But even at expense to himself he's going to have a holy people. And he isn't afraid of a scandal.

If that's going to help the saints to judge sin. And so it was this ark found itself in Dagon's temple. Dagon was the God of the Philistines.

A great huge idol half fish, bottom half half man. I don't know what unmentionable obscenities had taken place in Dagon's temple. And right into that dark temple was brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth and sat beside Dagon.

The next day when they came in that mighty awesome idol was on its face before that simple ark. And that's unfortunate, can't have that happen. So they put him back in his place.

And the next day they came in, he was down in his face before the ark. This time his head had fallen off and burnt his hands. So they took the ark out of the temple and they sent it to another city and terrible

things happened.

Plagues came. And terrible things happened. Plagues came.

And people began to suffer from tumors. So they said, well what should we do? Send to the next city. For goodness sake don't bring that thing here.

And the same plagues and tumors broke out there. And eventually they had a committee. What in the world are we going to do with this ark? And you have the words send away the ark of the God of Israel and let it go again to his own place.

They had to make a choice. If they wanted Dagon they had to ship the ark. But had they, had they wanted the ark they would have had to have shipped Dagon.

But they preferred to keep Dagon and send away the ark. They little knew what possibilities for blessing would have come even to Philistia. Had they been willing to pick up the bits of Dagon put them out for the garbage man and let the ark remain in sole possession of Dagon's temple.

Now I want to confess to you that by nature naturally my heart is Dagon's temple. Naturally self reigns and has reigned sometimes still does in that temple. This great fish God of self.

My motives have been what they have because self has been reigning. Self interests me at the back of everything and that's why I've done certain things and wanted to excel at certain things. My motives were self-inspired.

Dagon was in the background. My actions, my reactions to events and my reactions to people are all, have been what they have because self was on the throne and I've committed what sins I have only because of Dagon. The central letter of the little word sin is I and Dagon has been on the throne.

Why shouldn't I do that for my convenience or my pleasure? And even the good things I've done have all been a bit fishy. Oh smack to Dagon! Maybe not the top part of Dagon but the bottom part, the fishy part. And I know that what I've said about myself and I do really mean it.

Your heart says well that's true of me too. Naturally my heart for long has been Dagon's temple that can very easily slip back to that state of things again. And right into that temple ruled for so long in which terrible things have happened in our lives, obscene things sometimes.

Jesus Christ. Our heart, with the blood upon the mercy seat, with acceptance. It's good to accept the Lord Jesus.

I ought to. Look how happy he's going to make me. And I'm going to receive eternal life.

And so when the chance was given that the gospel was presented we very glibly and happily accepted the Lord Jesus into a temple in which Dagon had ruled for so long. And it didn't turn out much as a pleasant experience after all. For if Jesus really comes into a Dagon's temple he cannot doubt, challenge sin and reveal self and convict us of it.

And Dagon wobbles and falls. And when that happens what do we do? We put him back again, that is we justify ourselves. I don't think I like those meetings very much.

I don't like those sort of testimonies. I don't believe in them, these personal testimonies. Because it's revealing Dagon in our lives.

So we justify ourselves and put him back. But Jesus is so persistent. And later again he again challenges some of the things we're doing.

And bids us agree with him. And call them sin and take God's side against them. Well there may be a little bit of coming down but at last our agreement with God, our repentance is only partial.

When it says the stump of Dagon remained after that second time when Dagon's head and hands came off the margin of the revised version says the fishy part remained. Maybe the grosser part you give up but the fishy part. That's a bit fishy.

That's still there. We try and be a bit better. Oh how Dagon expresses himself.

How slow we are to agree with God. How quick to justify ourselves and keep Dagon there. It may be in things we've done which we won't agree with God about.

Relationships with others which we won't agree with God about. Jealousy or resentment. We won't agree with God about it.

Impurity. Indulgence in fantasies that aren't clean. And he challenges you.

Indeed he might challenge you about all fantasies. I believe all fantasies even if they're not impure are part of Dagon. Self-worship.

I've had been challenged about that so often. And how you can brush it aside. Only partially repent.

Not fully agree with God that this is sin. But it may not be only impure imaginations. He may be challenging us.

He's challenged us when he came in about impure actions. If not always with another person. On our own.

Such things as masturbation. And into a heart that's long been ruled by Dagon which has indulged itself as it wanted. Jesus comes.

The real Jesus. And he cannot but challenge and convict of these things. And this goes on and our justification of ourselves goes on for so long.

He's so persistent that eventually we have to face a choice. If we're not prepared for Dagon to be really broken. That is for us fully to agree with God that sin is sin.

And must be confessed as such. We must take God's side and go to the cross with it. Then we'll have to do what the Philistines did.

We'll have to send the ark away. We can't have both. They can't live together.

And I believe when I don't fully agree with God about sin, that he shows me. I don't mean to say I turn my back entirely on Jesus Christ. You may still continue as a Christian worker and still continue with that profession.

But as for anything dynamic or vital, the ark's been sent away. And you're left with simply routine in Christian service. And many Christians have become sometimes successful in that condition.

Dagon on the throne and the ark virtually sent away, although they've not yet abandoned their profession. But what's that if it lacks the glorious sweet reality of Jesus reigning in our lives and hearts? On the other hand, if it's going to be Jesus as we want, if we know we'll never be happy until he's in control, we can't go on with this half and half thing. Then Dagon will have to be shipped.

By that I mean you take a full and complete stand of agreement with God that this is sin. You may be tempted, but you're on God's side against it. You make no excuses.

You do not say, I may be wrong, but the other person's wrong. There's only one person in wrong before God and that's me. And as you are shown various aspects of Dagon, if you want Jesus, if I want Jesus, I'm learning I must be ruthless in agreeing with God about Dagon.

That's what I meant. If it's going to be Jesus, we'll have to take that attitude to Dagon. Now supposing the Philistines had done this latter course.

Supposing they had grace enough to recognize they had in their midst the ark of the God of all the earth. They could see the glory of it and they decided to ship Dagon. And they got a cart and put all the bits and pieces on, and even the fishy part, they put that on the cart and they took it out.

Wait a minute, what's it, an incinerator or somewhere? Got the garbage man to do it. And they left the ark in sole possession of the temple. What do you think would have happened? Knowing the God of Israel, knowing Jehovah as a God of grace, I know what would have happened.

I believe the blood stains sprinkled on the mercy seat would have availed even for Dagon's temple, in which such terrible obscenities had taken place. The blood of sacrifice would have been enough to cleanse and put right even Dagon's temple. And do you think it might have happened? The Shekinah glory would have come right into Dagon's temple.

And the people would have bowed before Jehovah. I know that's what happens when we take that choice of bowing deeply before the Lord Jesus, agreeing with Him, calling Him to do what He will and take over. We take this attitude to Dagon.

The blood of the Lord Jesus upon the mercy seat, that precious blood has power to transform even our Dagon's temple, in which such terrible things may have happened. And Dagon's temple becomes the temple of the Lord, in which Jesus alone is reigning. Be those things what they may.

The blood of Jesus Christ is enough for God on your behalf. And puts all things right. Apart from efforts of your own, you've done the one thing necessary.

You've called these things by their right name. You've judged them for what they are. You've put the blame where it belongs.

And the blood immediately availed for you. For it was shared and it paid the price. For those very things.

And your heart can be filled with the Shekinah glory, after having so recently been the scene of such wrong things. Such is the mighty power of the blood. And when we think of that possibility, well may we see there is power, value, wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb.

And the things that otherwise would have remained, and gone on condemning us and making us feel uneasy and taking away our joy and peace, are gone. They cease to condemn. Sins, condemnation is over and gone.

Jesus alone knoweth how. And this brings me to something very important. It's an amplification of our subject.

I believe what I've just said is tremendously important. The major part of sin's power over us is its ability to condemn us. It's its guilt.

It isn't merely its main power. It's to so charm us and entice us that we keep on doing it and can't stop doing it. It's possible for a man to commit certain things years ago and not to have repeated them.

But for him still to be under their dominion, for those things still to be condemning him, there may be things in your life about which people are not to ask any awkward questions, long ago or recently. And when that's so, we really are under the dominion of sin if it's not being repeated. But you're under its dominion if only by the fact that it still has ability to condemn us.

And if, in that condition, we try and engage in Christian service, the devil sees to it there's one of his little demons on your shoulder. And even if you try and do that bit of service, that demon is saying to you, hypocrite, hypocrite, hypocrite. Do you get on all right like that? We certainly don't.

And so often, if there's weakness and lack of positive joy and action and power in our service, it's because we're still in measure under the guilt of certain things that are happening. And that demon is still saying to us, hypocrite, hypocrite, hypocrite. And in that condition, there's little incentive but to go and do something else.

The devil says, you feel so down, you're so out, got nothing, why not indulge yourself again? Or why be particular about how you act and react? You aren't going to lose much, you've lost so much already. A little more isn't going to make much difference. And you go on and on and on.

You say, oh I'm under the bondage of sin. But do you know where it began? That bigger bondage of guilt. And it is that with which the blood of Jesus deals.

The guilt was exhausted and painful when Jesus said, it's finished on the cross and if you and I know how to go and say, sorry Lord, I'm wrong. And do say, not as a mere act of apology to the deity or apology to others, but done in faith in what that blood of Jesus means, a finished work. That guilt is gone.

You cannot be made more right with God than what the blood of Jesus makes you when you call sin, sin. Not even the Archangel Gabriel has a better righteousness before God than what you and I have when we take the sinner's place. There isn't one.

This is all my hope and peace. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. This presented before God is all my righteousness.

And you can walk into the Holy of Holies if the place belongs to you. Which it does by the blood of Jesus. That's the very basis of victory.

We talk about threatening yourself dead to sin. What does it mean to be dead to sin? Does it mean dead to sin solicitations? No. Because in Romans 6 it says that Jesus died unto sin.

Not only for it, but unto it. Was there a time when he was alive to sin solicitations and he died to it? No, no. He never was alive to sin solicitations.

What dying to sin meant to Jesus it means to us. What did it mean to him? Having uttered the great words on the cross, it's finished. And having been raised from the dead, having paid the price, he was dead to sin's power to condemn him any longer.

The moment he took our sins upon him, sin had power to condemn him. Which it did. But the moment he paid the price, sin lost its power to do so.

He was dead to it. And you can, instead of having that hangover, no freedom, be as dead to sin's power to condemn you as it was to condemn your surety. And be as free from that hangover as Jesus is.

He's free by his blood, you can be free in the same way. This is the basis of victory. Because, my dear friends, new motivations come into our hearts.

He that's forgiven much and released much loves much. You're so free! You see, some people never get free. Always asking, may I not do it again? But they aren't free as to what's already happened.

But when Jesus has set you so gloriously free that you, so to speak, got winds of praise, not emotion mainly, but objectively based on grace and what this God of grace has done for you, there's a motive in the world for you to hate that thing. And to be sharp on it should you begin to return and agree with God quickly. He that is forgiven much and released much loves much.

New motivations come in. And more than that, new, blessed reinforcements of the will. And when we've got right there, God knows how to come in and sweep.

But best of all, just because, not because we're victorious, but just because of the blood of Jesus which we've now had sprinkled, so to speak, upon us, day God's temple becomes a habitation of God through the Spirit. Amen and amen. That's what it means.

Sin shall not have dominion over you for you're not under the law but under grace. The law only condemns you. People who feel that bit down and go to the law only make things better worse.

They make promises, they embrace higher standards only to fail on those higher standards and only to give the devil more to condemn them about. But you're not under the law that asks for that. But under grace that tells you it's all been done and Jesus is on your side not against you.

When you agree with him, as we heard the other night. Ah, it's wonderful. This is the way.

And you know for lack of understanding of the way some Christians have begun to come to terms with certain sins and even I've read certain articles in evangelical journals excusing certain things, saying okay and I have an awkward feeling it may be the writer is rationalizing his own defeat but we can't blame him because perhaps not yet has he seen this marvelous way of grace. Good news is a bad thing. I want to close with a New Testament incident that ties up very much with this in Matthew 21.

Matthew 21 and here's the Ark of the Covenant coming into view. Well it really was Dagon's Temple. Though it was actually the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem but it had slipped back into Dagon's Temple.

Chapter 21 verse 12 and Jesus went into the Temple of God and cast out what he found there. All them that sold and overthrew the tables of the money chambers and the seats of them that sold out and said unto them it is written my house shall be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves you're making it a place of profit for your wretched selves out of my service. Wasn't that Dagon's Temple indeed but look at verse 14 having cast them out having begun to possess his own house verse 14 and the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them.

And I believe this is how it can be with us when he's looked round and what's there when he's put his finger on this and that and you've agreed with him you've called it sin and the money chambers are cleansed and turned out. The blind and the lame begin to come to him in your temple. Many a time that's happened.

When they really got through on this others somehow were attracted to that Jesus had done it and some began to lead other people to Jesus for the first time in their lives. They weren't doing it he was now in the temple and they were coming to him in the temple and he healed them. Isn't that worthwhile? It is worth living for this said John Wesley, Giles Wesley it is worth living for this to administer bliss and salvation in Jesus name.

Praise the Lord for this glorious possibility. Let us pray.

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