

Doing the Right Thing in the Wrong Way

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not only doing the right thing but also ensuring it is done in accordance with God's ways and with the right motivations.

Duration: 35:16

Scripture: Psalm 25:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of obeying and following the laws of the Lord. He emphasizes that these principles apply to any group that dedicates themselves to God's commandments. The preacher highlights the blessings that come from obedience, such as prosperity, protection from enemies, and being established as a holy people. However, he also warns against going about God's work in the wrong way, using the example of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Israel. The preacher emphasizes the need to do the right thing with the right motivation and in the right way, as Jesus also taught about righteous deeds.

Transcript

Now let's turn to Psalm 25 for the scripture reading this morning. I'll read the first, the odd-numbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even verses and shall we stand as we read God's word? Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

O my God, I trust in thee. Let me not be ashamed. Let not my enemies triumph over me.

Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed. Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me thy ways, O Lord.

Teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth and teach me. For thou art the God of my salvation.

On thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions.

According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness sake, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

The meek shall he guide in judgment and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great.

What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. My soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him and he will show them his covenant.

Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn thee unto me and have mercy upon me for I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged.

O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies for they are many and they hate me with cruel hatred.

O keep my soul and deliver me. Let me not be ashamed for I put my trust in thee. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me for I wait on thee.

Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. Let's pray. Father, we do ask that you would show us your ways, lead us in your paths.

Lord, we desire to do the right thing, but we need, Lord, your help and your guidance that we might do it in such a way that it will be pleasing and acceptable in your sight. Teach us now, Lord, your ways. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. You may be seated. Well, we had a couple of weeks of respite and now we continue our journey again through the Bible.

This week it's in 1 Chronicles chapters 13 through 15. And so tonight in our study we'll be looking at 1 Chronicles 13 through 15. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 13th chapter beginning with verse one.

We have here the story of David, his desire to bring the Ark of the Covenant unto Jerusalem. David consulted with the captains of the thousands and the hundreds and with every leader. And David said unto the congregation of Israel, if it seems good unto you, and if it is the Lord's will, let us send abroad unto our brothers everywhere that are left in all of the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and the Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us.

And let us bring again the Ark of our God to us, for we inquired not of it in the days of Saul. And all the congregation said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. So David gathered all Israel together from Sihur of Egypt, even to the entering of Emmat, to bring the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jerim.

And David went up and all of Israel to Baal, which is to Kirjath-Jerim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the Ark that dwelt between the cherubims and whose name is called upon it. And they carried the Ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab. And Uzzah and Ahio drove the cart.

And David and all of Israel played before God with their might and with their singing, with their harps, with the psalteries, with the timbrels, the cymbals, with the trumpets. And when they came unto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the Ark, for the oxen had stumbled. And the anger of the

Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the Ark, and there he died before God.

And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, wherefore he called the name of the place Perez-Uzzah, or the Breach of Uzzah, unto this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me? The desire that David had to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem was the right thing. David knew that the strength of a nation laid in its relationship to God.

David knew that righteousness exalts a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people. David had written, Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. David desired to bring to the people that consciousness, that God was at the heart and the center of the nation.

That they would be one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. And it was David's purpose to cause the people to acknowledge God as the God of Israel, the God who was guiding and directing their national life. David knew that God had said, It shall come to pass, if you will hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah your God, and observe and do all of his commandments, which I commanded you this day, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all of the nations of the earth.

David knew that God had promised blessings upon the nation, if they would just honor him as their God, and would seek his guidance, and would obey and follow his commandments, that they would be blessed indeed. You see, David knew the law of God quite well. Because in Deuteronomy, in the law, it said, When you establish a king over you, it shall be when he sits upon the throne of the kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this book.

So David was required actually, to write a copy of the Torah, the first five books. And it shall be with him, he shall read it all of the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, and to keep the words of this law, and the statutes to do them, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand, or to the left, to the end, that he might prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel. So David knew the law.

He meditated in the law of God daily. David had been reigning over the one tribe of Judah for seven and a half years in Hebron. David's reign was very successful.

When the other tribes saw how God had blessed David and his reign in Hebron, they all of them sent representatives to David with the request that David would come and rule over the whole nation of Israel. And so David was brought from Hebron and he took the city of Jerusalem, that he might make it the capital for the nation of Israel. And having established now his throne, it was his desire to cause the people to realize, we are going to be a people who serves and worships God.

We're going to follow the laws of God. Now, of course, the Ark of the Covenant was a symbol of the law of God. The Ark of the Covenant was a little golden box, and within the box there were the two tables of stone upon which God had etched the Ten Commandments.

It was a sign of God's covenant with the people. These are my commands. Follow these.

Keep these commandments. I will be your God. I will bless you.

Break these commandments and I will turn from you. In fact, the Bible, God really goes into detail of telling the blessings that will come if they would but keep his law. Now David realized that people are blessed who will meditate on the law of God.

In the very first Psalm, he said, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way with sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law does he meditate day and night. David loved the law of the Lord.

He wrote, O how I love thy law! It is the meditation all the day. From his study and meditation upon the law of God, he knew the promises of God and the blessings that could come to that nation who would obey and keep God's laws. In the law of God, Deuteronomy 28, the Lord said, It shall come to pass, if you will hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah your God, and observe and do all of his commandments, which I commanded you this day, that the Lord your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth.

And all of these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if you will hearken unto the voice of Jehovah your God. Now these blessings are national upon a nation. They are also blessings upon an individual.

These same truths or principles apply to any group who will dedicate themselves to obey and to follow the laws of the Lord. He said, You will be blessed in the city and in the field. Your children will be blessed, and your crops, your cattle, your herds.

You will be blessed with a surplus of food. You will be blessed when you come in and when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies that rise up against you to be smitten before your face.

They shall come out against you in one way, but they will flee in seven ways. The Lord will command his blessings upon your storehouses, and in all that you set your hand to do, he will bless you in the land which the Lord your God has given to you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people unto himself, as he has sworn unto you, if you will keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.

And all of the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they'll be afraid of you. And the Lord will multiply your goods. The Lord will open unto you his good treasure.

The heavens will give their rain unto the land in its season, and will bless all of the works of your hand. And you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall be above and not beneath, if you will hearken to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day to observe them and to do them.

You shall not go aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. And so these are God's promises. David was aware of them.

He is now being called to be the king over the nation. But he wants the people to be conscious that they are a people of God. And he wants the blessings of God to come upon the nation that he is ruling over.

And so the desire to bring the Ark of the Covenant, to put it there in the tabernacle that would be built in Jerusalem, so that the people would have a place to gather annually to worship the Lord and to acknowledge that God rules and God reigns over the nation. It was to bring them to this national consciousness that David's desire was to bring the Ark of the Covenant, a good desire. David also knew

that the law declared, it shall come to pass that if you will not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah your God and observe and do all of his commandments and his statutes, which he commands you this day, that all of these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

A nation that forgets God, a nation that forsakes God, is a nation that will experience the curses of God. You'll be cursed in the city. You'll be cursed in the field.

Your surpluses will shrink away. Your children will be a curse as well as your land and your cattle and your herds. You'll be cursed when you come in, cursed when you go out.

The Lord will send his curses upon you and you will be rebuked and vexed in everything you endeavor to do until you are destroyed and perished. This shall come upon you because of your wickedness in forsaking me. And the Lord will cause pestilence to beset you until you've been consumed from off the land.

The Lord will smite you with viruses and wars until you perish. So knowing this, it was a good, right desire in the heart of David. Let's bring the Ark of the Covenant.

If it's good in your mind and if it is pleasing to the Lord, let's bring the Ark of the Covenant unto Jerusalem in order that it might be here as a constant reminder that this is a nation whose heart is towards God and the laws of God. Within that Ark were the two tables of stone upon which God had put the Ten Commandments. And in the past, David knew that as long as the people kept the commandments of God and followed his commandments, that they were blessed and they were prospered.

David also knew that in their history, when the people turned from God, that they became oppressed, that they became cursed of God and thus a right desire. Let's make God preeminent. Let's put God first.

Let's put him at the heart and the center of our national life. His desires were good and commendable. David was wanting to do the right thing.

However, he was going about to do it in the wrong way. In the Book of the Law, there were specific instructions of how the Ark of the Covenant was to be moved. When they had constructed the Ark of the Covenant, on each of the corners of the Ark, they had put these little golden rings.

And then they took sticks of acacia wood, covered them with gold, and they slid them through the rings so that the sticks were out on either side of the Ark of the Covenant. And when it was to be moved, the priest would come and they would not touch the Ark, but they would put the staves on their shoulders and the Ark would be carried between four priests, holding these staves on their shoulders and bearing the Ark of the Covenant. But it wasn't to be touched by man.

The Lord gave the commandment in Numbers chapter 4 verse 15. When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all of the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp moves forward, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it, but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. So these things were to be held so sacred that man should not touch it.

It is something that has been dedicated and set apart for exclusively for God. And so in the wilderness, when the time would come that they would move, they would have instructions. Part of the priests would take down the tabernacle and fold up the curtains and all.

Others would take down the sticks and then the sons of Aaron would go in and they would cover all of the vessels in the tabernacle. The Ark of the Covenant, Altar of Incense, the Candlestubs, the Table of Showbread. They'd all be covered and then the sons of Kohath would come and carry them, not touching them, but carrying them with these staves.

So this is the method by which it was to be moved. David, however we read, had a new cart made and they had a couple of oxen that were drawing this cart to Jerusalem. David did not obey the commandment of the Lord as far as the transferring of the Ark, but he actually followed the Philistine example.

The Philistines, when they had captured the Ark of the Covenant, found that it had been a curse to them. Everywhere the Ark of the Covenant went in the Philistine territory, men would break out with boils. So when they finally brought it to the Philistine city of Gath, they said, oh no, no, no, you don't put that thing on us.

And they said, well, what will you do with it? Well, let's just send it back. And so they made a cart and they had a couple of cows and they attached the cows to the cart and the cows drew the cart on back to Israel. David is following now the Philistine example.

He's doing a right thing, but he is doing it in a wrong way. There are many churches today that are guilty of the same sin as David. They have a right desire, but they're going about to accomplish it in a wrong way.

They desire to see more people attending church. That's good. It's good that more people become interested in church and attending church.

But rather than looking to God's way, they look to Madison Avenue and they start using promotional gimmicks to get people to come to church rather than following the ways of the Lord. We read in Acts chapter two, they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer. And the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.

That was God's method. But churches today are adopting man's methods and they're seeking through Madison Avenue techniques to attract and to draw people into the churches. As I said, the desire to get more people into church is correct, but the methods by which we do them must also be correct.

Lest we find ourselves as David following the Philistine example. David's endeavor to bring the Ark of the covenant, of course, ended in tragedy. As the Ark was being carried on this cart and Uzzah was driving the cart.

One of the oxen stumbled. The cart lurched and Uzzah put forth his hand to stop the Ark from falling over. And in so doing, when he touched the Ark, God smote him dead.

Here was a great procession. The people were dancing, the people were singing. It was a time of great hilarity, joy, blessing, all kinds of instruments.

As the people were singing, dancing, bringing the Ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, looking forward to setting this up within the tabernacle. And suddenly this whole scene became very somber. The music ceased, the songs ceased, the dancing stopped, and people became very sober.

And David was greatly displeased. And he said, how can I bring this unto me? Suddenly they realized what a serious thing it was to do the work of God and to make sure you did it in the right way. It isn't just

doing it, but it's doing it in the right way.

So David greatly feared the Lord. And he just said, leave it right here. I'm not going to try and take it any further.

And they were at the house of Obed-Edom, and they took the Ark and put it in the house of Obed-Edom, and it stayed there for a period of time. Doing the right thing is very important, but equally important is that I do it with the right motivation, and I do it in the right way. Jesus warned us that we needed to be careful in how we did our righteousness or our righteous deeds.

He said, be careful that you don't do them in order to be seen of men to do them. In other words, don't let your motive in doing your righteous actions, don't let your motive be, I want men to know how righteous or spiritual I am. Don't let that be your motive.

And Jesus illustrated in giving and praying and fasting how that there was a wrong way and a right way of doing it. And the wrong way is doing it in such a way as to draw attention to yourself, to bring people to say, oh, did you see that? Isn't he a spiritual giant? Isn't he wonderful? Doesn't he walk so close with the Lord? Years ago when I was directing a summer camp in Arizona, one of the ministers who brought his young people to the camp at six o'clock in the morning would go into the chapel and pray so loudly that it would wake up the whole camp. And I went to him because these kids needed their sleep.

And I told him, look, go in your closet, shut the door and pray to your father who sees in secret. He's not deaf. And of course, he was highly offended.

But you have to question the person's motive when they pray so loud that they wake up a whole camp of kids. You know, and everybody, oh my, every morning he says, isn't he a godly man? No, he wasn't. He was doing a right thing.

It's important to pray, and it's good to pray first thing in the morning. But it's also important that you not do it in such a way that it draws attention to you. And so with giving, so with fasting and all, there's a right way to do these things.

It's a way that doesn't draw attention to yourself. It's a way in which people don't even know what you're doing. And thus you receive the praise and the glory of God for those things.

The Bible tells us to examine ourselves. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged of God. So it's important when I am doing things ostensibly for the Lord, that I take a close look at it.

Why am I doing this? Am I doing it to please man or am I doing it to please God? Am I seeking to gain the attention of man and the praise of man, or am I seeking to receive the praise of God for the things I do? David was doing a right thing, but he did it in a wrong way, and he suffered the consequences. And unfortunately, there are many, many people today who as David, they're doing the right thing, but they're not doing it in the right way. Tragically, there are many men in the ministry today who are in the ministry to fulfill some kind of a psychological need in their own life and do not have a true call of God.

And so it is important. Yes, very important that we be doing the right thing, but it is equally important that we do it in such a way that God is pleased. For in doing it in the wrong way, as Uzzah, we can suffer the consequences.

There's the right way, the wrong way. May God help us to do it the right way. Father, we thank you for these examples that you give to us that teach us such important lessons for life.

And Lord, how important it is for us to serve you, to keep your laws there upon our hearts. And Lord, to put you at the center of our life and of our being, that we would observe and do the things that you have commanded. Lord, we realize that it's also important that as we do these things, we do them in such a way as when men see our good works, they glorify our Father, which is in heaven, rather bringing glory to us.

So Lord, delicate balance. We need your help. We need your wisdom.

We need your guidance, Lord, not only to do the right things, but to do them in such a way that you are pleased. We ask, Father, in Jesus' name, your help in this regard. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down at the front this morning to pray for your needs. Many of you have come to church today with real needs, family problems, physical illnesses, financial problems, maybe difficulty at work or at school, maybe some important decisions in the week ahead. And we would encourage you to come on down.

And these men are here to pray with you and to join with you in prayer today that you might find God's help, God's strength, God's guidance. God is wanting to minister to you. The Bible says you have not because you ask not.

And so they're here to pray with you and to agree with you in prayer for your needs. So we would encourage you as soon as we're dismissed, go against the flow. While others are going out, we would encourage you to come on down and let them pray for you today that you might experience God's guidance and help in the issues of your life.

Now, may the Lord be with you and watch over and keep you in his love. May he cause you to always abound in all things in our Lord Jesus Christ. May you be enriched in your walk and in your fellowship with him.

May your life just overflow with his love, that you might bring his love and grace and beauty to others that you meet this week in Jesus name. The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee and be gracious unto thee.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Amen.

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