

2 Samuel 6:1-8. No one admits to a problem with pride. It is usually only apparent after fallout. Today's text clearly demonstrates the gravity of being prideful before God. Can the warning of the text prevent negative consequences of pride in our lives?

How many interactions produce familiarity? Three interactions allowed a fox to be comfortable around a lion. Three interactions to move from fear to boldness. These interactions were not in a zoo or the wild but in "The Fox and the Lion" of Aesop's *Fables*.

"FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT"

~ AESOP.

When translating Aesop in English, Samuel Croxall sought to solidify the fable by including a contemporary application. He writes: "From this Fable we may observe two extremes in which we fail... The one is bashfulness... the other, an overbearing impudence."¹ Impudence or audacity, pride. Croxall goes on to show how familiarity is related.

The fable and Croxall's application identifies a line between healthy and dangerous familiarity. Familiarity in relationships may produce meaningful companionship; it may also cause deep hurt. Familiarity may produce a confident machinist who knows his trade. It may also create a daydreamer who's a danger. Whether three interactions or three-hundred, repetition can cause something to go awry.

Healthy or dangerous—it's one or the other even in the worship of God. In today's text, we will see the latter of the two—a dangerous familiarity. At the center of our text is none other than King David, a man after God's own heart. If something can be awry in his worship, what does it reveal about our worship of God?

WELL-INTENDED WORSHIP (2 SAMUEL 6:1-2)

2 Samuel 6:1-2—David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people who were with him from Baale-judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned on the cherubim.

We know that David desired to restore ceremonial worship through the ark. The ark was a chest that held the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. Though God isn't contained to an earthly location, the ark symbolized God's relationship with Israel. David

was concerned that under the leadership of his predecessor, Saul, the ark had been neglected. This reflected a national coldness towards God (1 Chr 13:1-4). So, David was leading the people back to a renewed relationship with God

Also, David wanted to protect the ark, since it was sitting near the border in the village of Baale-judah—not far from the Philistines. The same Philistines whom Israel had just defeated (2 Sam 5:17-24). The ark, a target for revenge?

While David seems well-intended, the author gives a major indicator that such wasn't the case. Notice the simple word "again" in verse 1? It's a marker. We need to look for a previous time when David gathered the chosen men of Israel. This happened in the previous chapter (2 Sam 5:17-25).

What is difference in David's actions? Dependence! In chapter 5, David inquires of God not once but twice on the manner he should conduct himself in battle. In chapter 6, prayer isn't in the picture. David had moved from prayerful dependence upon God to thinking God depended upon him.

David was taking God for granted. In David's younger days, long before he fought Goliath, the Philistines captured the ark (1 Sam 4:11). What happened? They were wrecked by it. Their man-made god was destroyed and plagues spread. The Philistines even placed the ark on a cart with two untrained, unmanned cows. Yet, God led the cows to Israel's lands (1 Sam 5:1-6:12). Lesson: God will handle who and how one can come near to His holiness. A factor no longer anywhere on David's radar.

Here's the challenge for worship: Familiarity with God can shift our faith from God onto ourselves. We define what is or isn't acceptable before God by our knowledge and experience, and it can seem well-intended. Yet, without faith in God, it is "impossible to please Him" (Heb 11:6). In fact, seeking to please God without His guidance and power will have devastating results. Something we're about to see...

UNEXAMINED WORSHIP (2 SAMUEL 6:3-7)

2 Samuel 6:3-7—And they carried the ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart, with the ark of God, and Ahio went before the ark. And David and all the house of Israel were

Pride Comes Before the Cart

celebrating before the LORD, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals. And when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down there because of his error, and he died there beside the ark of God

At first, all the details look good. Two brothers were responsible for moving the ark from their family's home on a brand new cart. With Ahio leading from front, this left the rear-guide for Uzzah. It seems so grand a procession for God! Yet, that tiny detail about a hill alludes to trouble (2 Sam 6:3).

And boy was trouble ahead! The downhill trek arrived at a threshing floor. The ground there would have been worn by the repetitive actions of man and beast extracting grain from the wheat. Terrain differences meant a rough transition. Instinctively, Uzzah sought to steady the ark as the oxen traversed the hurdle... it was a deadly decision. God penalized Uzzah's action with death (2 Sam 6:6-7)

Why death? This time the author used the repetition of "cart," in verse 3 as a marker. Israel never moved the ark with a cart. Only the Philistines who tested God used a cart. The ark was designed with rings for poles, and God instructed that "holy things," like the ark, be carried (Ex 25:12-15; Num 7:9). Uzzah's unexamined action led to his death because David's well-meaning plan didn't consult God and His Word.

At this point, we see what is at stake in the worship of God: life and death. There are God-given instincts for survival, but sometimes what we call instincts are gut-reactions. Gut-reactions are practices that are emotionally-driven. Results-driven practices told David he could move the ark quicker with a cart. Yet, he set aside truths God revealed. Missing evident truths leads to death!

UNFULFILLED WORSHIP (2 SAMUEL 6:8)

2 Samuel 6:8—And David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah. And that place is called Perez-uzzah to this day.

This tragedy reveals David's heart. We know this by what Jesus teaches about the connection between our actions and our heart—

"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt 12:34). A way to illustrate this concept is a tea bag in hot water. The water only brings out what is in the bag. Hot water cannot change pekoe orange to sweet mint tea, can it? Of course, not. Similarly, the heat of life produces a response that reflects what was already within us.

Sadly with David, the heat of this tragedy didn't bring out tears or a brokenness. Instead, David boils with anger. It shows how much he was putting at stake in his well-intended worship plans. As much as these plans were about God, they were David's. The procession was about making King David look good and right with God. So, before the ark was loaded on the illegal cart, David was filled with pride.

Theologically, pride is elevating oneself above our Creator God. All the difficulties we experience are tied to this pride's appearance in the Garden of Eden. Pride exchanged the truth of God's goodness for a lie promising to elevate mankind to gods (Gen 3:5; Rom 1:25). Everyone ever since struggles with this same pride.

The pride of elevating oneself above God can occur when we have a high familiarity with God. Talking about familiarity: Adam and Eve would take walks with God (Gen 3:8); David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14). Yet, even more than these personal interactions, the Apostle Paul says every created object is familiar with God as God's attributes are evident in creation.

Romans 1:19-20—For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

The United States has had a high familiarity with Jesus Christ. In our case, this familiarity has led to our current amoral condition. We desire to use our positions to fight back for God. Yet, if we are not careful, our actions may place Him on a "cart" just like King David.

So, first, consider your own familiarity with God. Is it a healthy familiarity with Him or one that's views God with contempt? Ultimately, it's a question of who gets the glory with your life: Jesus or you? May it be Jesus.

¹ Samuel Croxall and Aesop, *The Fables of Aesop: With Instructive Applications*. (1857), 230-231.