

Holiness and Compromise

1 Chronicles 13:1-4

Introduction: On October 31, 1983, Korean Airlines Flight 007 departed from Anchorage, Alaska, for a direct flight to Seoul, Korea. Unknown to the crew, however, the computer engaging the flight navigation system contained a 1 1/2 degree routing error.

At the point of departure, the mistake was unnoticeable. One hundred miles out, the deviation was still so small as to be undetectable, but as the giant 747 continued across the Aleutian Islands and out over the Pacific, the plane increasingly strayed from its proper course. Eventually it was flying over Soviet air space. Russian radar picked up the error, and fighter jets scrambled to intercept Flight 007. A short time later the jet was shot out of the sky over mainland Russia and the lives of everyone onboard was lost, all because of a 1 1/2 degree routing error!

I wonder if this isn't a picture of the tragic course that many Christians find themselves on. They depart from an intimate relationship with God and head straight for a destination that is offensive and far removed from Him.

Maybe you've known someone like this or, possibly, been in a comparable situation yourself.

In the last few years I have counseled with many who have shared similar stories with me. On each occasion, I was struck with the realization that few believers take a flying leap from a life characterized by the passionate pursuit of God into moral chaos.

It is much more common that we ease into disobedience in such subtle ways, that at first, they barely seem to affect us at all. Yet over a long period of time, when no attempt has been made to repent and seek God anew, we discover that we are sinning in ways that we would never have thought possible only a short time before.

So it was for the central figure in this passage.

Background: The occasion that we're looking at this morning covers just such an instance. The Israelites had been at war with the Philistines for many years. They had won some battles and lost others.

At one point in their conflict, the Philistines managed to steal away the Ark of God, otherwise known as the Ark of The Covenant, and carry it into the temple of their god, Dagon, in the city of Ashdod (See **1 Samuel 4-6**).

The ark was the most holy object in the Israelite's system of worship under Moses. It served as a symbol of the very presence of God (See **Exodus 25:22**).

"There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the covenant law, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites."

It was no small thing that the Philistines had done this.

The Bible tells us that God's hand was "heavy upon the people of Ashdod" for their actions so that eventually they moved the ark to another Philistine city named Gath.

Unfortunately for them, the residents of Gath fared no better.

Another move to Ekron, a third Philistine city, yielded the same result.

In desperation someone conceived of a plan that would determine whether or not the trouble that had befallen them was from the God of Israel or not.

If it was determined that it was, they would return the ark in an effort to appease His anger.

Here was their plan: The ark was placed on an ox cart pulled by two cows each of which had recently given birth to a calf. The calves were taken from their mothers.

Then cows were set free under the watchful eyes of the Philistines.

They reasoned that if the animals left their calves (an unnatural thing for them to do) and carried it in the direction of Beth-Shemesh (a city of the Jews, toward which the cows had no special inclination to go) then they had done the right thing.

If not, they would assume that everything that had happened was the product of mere chance.

It probably comes as no surprise to learn that the cows went straight to Beth-Shemesh.

Upon receiving the ark, the Jews chopped up the wood from the cart and sacrificed the cows to the Lord.

After more sacrifices and some foolishness on the part of the men who lived there (i.e. they looked into the ark and were put to death by God as a result--See **Numbers 4:20** and **Exodus 33:20**) the ark finally found a resting place for the next 60+ years through the end of Samuel's judgeship, the reign of Saul and the installation of David as King.

It was stored at the home of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim, about 7.5 miles northwest of Jerusalem.

During that time the new king of Israel, Saul, felt no compulsion to check on it at all.

Finally, many years later, his successor, David decided to bring the ark up to Jerusalem.

Though his intentions might have been good, the result was disastrous.

Having neglected much of God's instructions regarding the transportation of the ark, the Levites serving under David, failed to follow the commands of God and reaped His anger as a result.

It is likely that some of us are inclined to think that God was unloving and unfair in his treatment of Uzzah.

If you are one who thinks this, may I suggest a different conclusion: God did not give us this passage so that we might question His justice, but reverence His holiness and obey His Word.

Everything about the Ark was ultimately meant to communicate something about the character of God.

From the way it was built, to what it contained and how it was to be transported, God was using it as a way to illustrate His absolute holiness.

If He allowed the Israelites to compromise His character by failing to carry out His instructions regarding the ark, then they would foolishly begin to treat Him as something common, denying Him His rightful glory.

GOD DEMANDED THAT THEY OBEY HIM EVEN IN THE LITTLE THINGS!

Here are three applications from this story that are worth considering this morning:

I. Compromise Disrespects the Word of God (See *1 Chronicles 13:7-9*).

The word "compromise" according to the Random House Dictionary means "a settlement of differences by mutual concession."

While this may be helpful in resolving conflicts in human relationships, compromise is something that God never wants us to do when it comes to His will.

He demands absolute obedience. As a matter of fact, the entire Godhead is at work in us to bring it about (See **1 Peter 1:2**).

"who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:"

There were at least two compromises made by the Jews in the handling of the ark that at first glance seemed fairly harmless.

The first was the failure to properly transport it. This was to be done by the sons of Kohath, who was the son of Levi, the father of the Levites (See **Numbers 4:15**).

They were to carry it on their shoulders using poles that looped through rings attached to it.

Instead, the Levites followed the example of the Philistines, their pagan neighbors, and placed it on a new cart to bring it to Jerusalem.

The question might be asked, "Why did God show his anger toward Uzzah for touching the ark, but not do anything to the Levites for transporting it improperly?"

Clearly this was contrary to His instruction as well. It seems that the answer is because God never said that He would put to death those who failed in their duty to transport the ark in the proper way.

The reason that they were to carry the ark was to prevent anyone from touching it.

What we need to realize here is that the first compromise ultimately led to the second (referred to in **2 Samuel 6:7** as an act of irreverence).

Because they disobeyed God's instruction in moving the ark, it began to move when an ox stumbled. Uzzah reached out his hand to steady it and in doing so, failed to show proper respect to God.

This offense, though seemingly done with good intentions, was an affront to the holiness of God and punished accordingly (See **Numbers 4:15**).

“After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, only then are the Kohathites to come and do the carrying. But they must not touch

the holy things or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the tent of meeting. ”

Illustration: Have you noticed that small compromises lead to big ones? Consider the example of King David in **2 Samuel 11**. At the time when kings went off to war, David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

This was the first compromise.

One night, while walking around on the roof of the palace, he spotted a woman bathing. Instead of averting his eyes David set his desire on Bathsheba.

*This was the second compromise (See **Exodus 20:17**).*

Later, he orchestrated a sexual relationship with her knowing that she was married to another man named Uriah.

*This was the third compromise (See **Exodus 20:14**).*

Then, when she conceived and he couldn't manipulate his way out of the impending disgrace, David had Uriah killed.

*This was the fourth compromise (See **Exodus 20:13**).*

Do we see it church...From neglect, to lust, to adultery, to murder...David drifted away from God into moral chaos.

If it happened to him, a man after God's own heart, then It can happen to anyone!

THIS LEADS ME TO MY SECOND POINT.

II. Compromise Devastates the People of God .(See **1 Chronicles 13:10-11).**

We might wonder if God wasn't a little harsh with Uzzah when we consider that his actions cost him his life.

But let's consider for a moment his background and see if this sheds any additional light on the subject.

(1) Uzzah was either the son or grandson of Abinadab who lived in Kiriath Jearim.

(2) The Ark was stored at his home for more than 60 years prior to David's attempt to move it to Jerusalem. Since many people knew it was there, it is safe to assume that Uzzah did as well.

(3) Over the years, he would have listened as Abinadab had talked about the Ark of God, Israel's most holy object of worship.

(4) As we have seen from **Numbers 4:15**, God had provided clear instructions about what was to happen when the Ark was moved. It was to be moved only by the sons of Kohath and never to be touched under penalty of death.

But what do we find here in this story? Uzzah and his brother, Ahio, are given the responsibility for the big move. **CLEARLY, UZZAH SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER!**

All we can assume is that in apparent disregard for the holiness of the Lord and His instructions, he felt obliged to perform the task.

When the ark began to look as if it would fall, Uzzah took it upon himself to reach out and touch this sacred object. He did this instead of trusting God to care for it, and as we know, with devastating effect to himself.

That isn't all that happened however.

It also brought great distress on David.

In the midst of celebrating the return of the ark before God, his mood shifted from joy to anger and later to fear as he came to realize his contribution to Uzzah's death (See **1 Chronicles 15:11-13**).

Illustration: I wonder how many times our compromises have led to some pretty serious circumstances for ourselves or others.

Chuck Yeager, the famed test pilot, was flying an F-86 Sabre over a lake in the Sierras when he decided to buzz a friend's house. During a slow roll, he suddenly felt the aileron lock (Ailerons are the flight controls that roll the airplane around its longitudinal axis).

"It was a hairy moment," said Yeager, "flying about 150 feet off the ground and upside down." A lesser pilot might have panicked, but Yeager let off the throttle, pushed up the nose and sure enough the aileron unlocked. He repeated the maneuver several more times and with each one the problem reoccurred.

Yeager knew that four pilots had died under similar circumstances. Investigators went to work to find the problem. They discovered that a bolt on the aileron cylinder was installed improperly.

Eventually the culprit was found in a North American plant. He was an older gentleman on the assembly line who ignored detailed instructions about how to insert the bolt, because, by golly, he knew that bolts were supposed to be placed head up and not head down.

No one ever told the man how many pilots died because of his actions.

WE HAVE SAID SO FAR, THAT COMPROMISE DISRESPECTS THE WORD OF GOD AND DEVASTATES THE PEOPLE OF GOD. NOW LET'S CONSIDER ONE MORE CONSEQUENCE OF COMPROMISE.

III. Compromise Deflects the Blessing of God (*See 1 Chronicles 13:12-14*). 0

Fortunately for David, he refused to press on with the quest to transfer the ark to Jerusalem. Overwhelmed with fear at having witnessed God's anger, he took the ark aside to the house of Obed-Edom where it remained for 3 more months.

He was one of the Levites who had originally been appointed to care for the ark of God (**See 1 Chronicles 15:8**).

The result: The Lord blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he had!

Doing things the right way, in complete obedience to God's Word, resulted in God pouring out His blessing on this servant.

Application: Who here doesn't desire God's blessings in your life today? Then be careful how you live.

"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers. " (Psalm 1:1-3)"

Conclusion: One of the blessings of being married is the privilege of cuddling with your wife. Most people enjoy the closeness. I know I do. A while back I made the mistake of eating a clove of garlic. I thought it was an onion or a little white potato. Turned out I was wrong. Now, I've eaten garlic before and carried that smell with me for a few hours. But never like this! I think the smell of that clove of garlic actually oozed out of my skin for days.

During that time, I tried to approach my wife to cuddle only to be rebuffed. It wasn't until I was able to get the smell out, that she was willing to allow me to draw close to her and once again experience the blessing of my relationship with Sam.

There are some of us sitting here this morning who have not felt close to God in a long time. May I suggest that the problem may be the stench of your sin? I want to encourage you to take whatever steps are necessary to get it out of your life, so that you can once again enjoy the blessing of sweet and intimate fellowship with God.

We are going to take communion in just a moment...a reminder of the gift of forgiveness and cleansing of the stench of our sins.

LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

The Communion Supper, instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is a sacrament, which proclaims His life, His sufferings, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, and the hope of His coming again. It shows forth the Lord's death until His return.

The Supper is a means of grace in which Christ is present by the Spirit. It is to be received in reverent appreciation and gratefulness for the work of Christ.

All those who are truly repentant, forsaking their sins, and believing in Christ for salvation are invited to participate in the death and resurrection of Christ. We come to the table that we may be renewed in life and salvation and be made one by the Spirit.

In unity with the Church, we confess our faith:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

And so we pray:

"Heavenly Father, we confess our sins to you and ask for your forgiveness. Cleanse us and make us worthy to partake in this holy meal.

O Lord God, heavenly Father, we praise and thank you for your grace that through your Son Jesus Christ, you established this supper in which we eat His body and drink His blood.

By your Holy Spirit, help us to use this gift worthily, to confess and forsake our sins, to confidently believe that we are forgiven through Christ, and to grow in faith and love day by day until we come at last to the joy of eternal salvation, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

On the night in which He was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, gave it to His disciples, and said: "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

Likewise, when the supper was over, He took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to His disciples, and said: "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." (Matthew 26:27-29)

And so, we gather as the Body of Christ to offer ourselves to you in praise and thanksgiving. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these your gifts. Make them by the power of your Spirit to be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the Body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

By your Spirit make us one in Christ, one with each other, and one in the ministry of Christ to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Amen.

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, let us pray: (Here the congregation may pray the Lord's Prayer)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Before the partaking of the bread:

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken for you, preserve you blameless, unto everlasting life. Eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful.

Before the partaking of the cup:

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for you, preserve you blameless unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and be thankful.