

## **Reforming Worship**

### **2 Samuel 6:1-23**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-23-2012

#### **Introduction – context of worship (“before the LORD”)**

We are back into 2 Samuel again, and I’ve decided that I am going to preach on the whole chapter, rather than just the first eleven verses as stated in your bulletin. This is a passage that has been used for hundreds of years to demonstrate the Regulative Principle of Worship. You might wonder why, since it isn’t in the tabernacle. But the whole event revolved around the Ark of the Covenant, which was the throne of God. And the author assumes that you have already read the history of 1 Samuel to catch the significance of what is happening here. But in case you haven’t, I’m going to give you a bit of a review.

In 1 Samuel 5 the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant, and the glory of God had departed from Israel. Israel had become Ichabod. When the Philistines put the ark in their temple, God destroyed their idol, Dagon. God will have no competitors. God also judged the Philistines with tumors because they were trying to worship Him inappropriately by adding Him to all the rest of their gods. In fact, God caused such havoc in Philistia, that they decided that they needed to get rid of the ark. They put the ark on an ox cart, hitched two cows to the cart, but kept their calves behind to see what would happen. Ordinarily the cows would turn right around and go back to their calves to let them nurse. The calves were crying for their mama cows and the cows were crying for their babies, but miraculously, without being told which direction to go, the cows went all the way into Israel without any hesitation and brought the ark of the covenant back to God’s people in Beth Shemesh.

And there was rejoicing in Israel – at least for a while. The Israelites in that city got curious and wanted to see what was inside the ark of the covenant, and when they peeked inside, God’s fire came out and struck down 50,070 Israelites. You think what happened to Uzzah was bad – well God had previously killed over 50,000 Israelites for just taking a peek into the ark. That may seem rather harsh, but God insists that we approach Him on *His* terms. In fact, in an earlier age, God had killed two of Aaron’s sons for making a tiny adjustment to the way they worshipped God (they just took fire from a different place than God had instructed them) – it seemed

© Copyright 2012 by Phillip G. Kayser. Permission is granted to all readers to download, print, and distribute on paper or electronically any Sermons, provided that each reprint bear this copyright notice, current address, and telephone number, and provided that all such reproductions are distributed to the public without charge. They may not be sold or issued in book form, CD-ROM form, or microfiche without prior permission.

Phillip G. Kayser • Dominion Covenant Church • 307.N 41st Ave. Omaha, NE 68131 • 402.934.3300

like such a small adjustment to God's rules for worship in the temple. But God's fire came out and killed them. And when Aaron got angry at God, God said through Moses, **“By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.”** (Lev. 10:3) You don't come near God on your own terms. That's the Regulative Principle of Worship.

But back to our story, after 50,000 Israelites were killed for peeking into the ark, they wanted to get rid of the ark. And that's the natural response of our hearts apart from grace. It's only God's Holy Spirit that can stir up sinful hearts to have a hunger for holiness and to make us attracted to God's holiness and to make us hunger to worship Him. If His Holy Spirit is not indwelling us, our hearts immediately do something counterfeit. Our hearts begin to make idols and to engage in false worship.

So the people of that town didn't want to have the ark around anymore. They told the leaders of the next town over, Kirjath Jearim, “Hey guys! Guess what? We found the ark. How would you like to have it?” They tried to pawn it off on the next town. God seemed a little bit too dangerous close up. So the men of Kirjath Jearim came and brought the ark to their city, and it was placed in the house of Abinadab. And God prospered the house of Abinadab. So for decades people came there to worship the Lord and to offer sacrifices. And I guess the point is that people sacrificed to the Lord God and worshipped wherever the ark was. If the synagogues were the outposts of worship, this was the heart of Israel's worship, but both were patterned after the same core principles. So verse 5 speaks of this worship as being **“before the Lord.”** And again in verse 14 – **“before the Lord.”** And again in verse 21 the worship was described as being **“before the Lord.”** This was not simply a parade. It was a public act of worshipping before the Lord.

Michael Bushell says,

No other example of Scripture shows more clearly than this the folly of ignoring God's own instructions as to how He is to be approached. Seen from a limited point of view, Uzzah's *intentions* were certainly “good.” But “will-worship,” even when offered with the best of intentions, is still sacrilege. ... When the ark was later brought to Jerusalem, David was exceedingly careful to see that it was moved “as Moses had commanded according to the word of the Lord” (1 Chron. 15:5). David's charge to the Levites on that occasion ought to be burned on the hearts of all who seek to worship the Lord in an acceptable and fitting manner: “Because you did not carry it at the first, the Lord made an outburst on us, for we did not seek Him according to the ordinance” (15:13)

We call that the Regulative Principle of Worship because God's Word regulates everything that goes on in worship. That's the exact opposite of the Lutheran view, which says that we can do anything we want in worship so long as God does not forbid it. But Scripture says the opposite – you should not do a single thing in worship that the Bible does not specifically authorize. Here is how Deuteronomy 12 words it. In contrast to worshipping according to human wisdom, God says, **“You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”** That in a nutshell is the Regulative Principle of Worship – you can only worship the way God commands you to worship. You cannot add to it or take away from it. Now, God *Himself* has made changes: He has removed most ceremonial aspects of worship in the New Testament, but *we* may not take away or add to it. And so, this is really one of many passages that have been used by Reformed Presbyterian, Baptists, Congregationalists, and other Reformed denominations of the past to teach concerning the Regulative Principle of Worship. And I hope our own hearts are stirred up to be more God-centered as we consider these verses this morning.

## I. The gathering to the ark – public versus private worship

Let's start with verse 1:

**2Samuel 6:1 Again David gathered all *the choice men* of Israel, thirty thousand.**

There is a gathering together to the ark. Down in verse 5 it adds that **“all the house of Israel played music before the Lord.”** So it wasn't just a gathering of leaders; it was a gathering of all the people. Keep your fingers here, and flip over to 1 Chronicles 13, and we are going to be going back and forth between these two parallel passages that describe the same event. So keep your fingers in both places. 1 Chronicles 13 makes clear that though the leaders led, all Israel went up and gathered together in worship.

Beginning to read at verse 1:

**1Chronicles 13:1 Then David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, *and* with every leader.**

**1Chronicles 13:2 And David said to all the assembly of Israel, “*If it seems good to you, and if it is of the LORD our God, let us send out to our brethren everywhere who are left in all the land of Israel, and with them to the priests and Levites who are in their cities and their common-lands, that they may gather together to us;***

**1Chronicles 13:3 and let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we have not inquired at it since the days of Saul.”**

That's really sad when you think about it. Worship before God's throne had been for the most part abandoned. Continuing to read in verse 4:

**1Chronicles 13:4** Then all the assembly said that they would do so, for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

**1Chronicles 13:5** So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the entrance of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath Jearim.

**1Chronicles 13:6** And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, to Kirjath Jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God the LORD, who dwells *between* the cherubim, where *His* name is proclaimed.

This was not private worship. This was not even the worship of a Presbytery of leaders. This was not a civic parade. This was a public worship service of all God's people. And the Regulative Principle of Worship applies particularly to public worship services. And yet, unfortunately, it is in the public worship services of this land where all the experimentation of new forms and methods of worship have been going on. This has made some people so frustrated that they have abandoned public worship altogether. And *that's* not an option. Hebrews 10:25 admonishes us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together – despite problems in the congregations of the Hebrews and despite problems in Corinth. Exodus and Leviticus says that there were special public worship services at the festivals, and there are weekly public worship services in the synagogues. And the Regulative Principle applies to both.

And there is something that happens in public worship that is unusual, and should be longed for. It is the gathering of God's people before the throne room of God every bit as much today as they were gathering before God's throne on that day. In Hebrews 12 God promises special access to the heavenlies as we gather publically in worship. And though Hebrews says that we can approach that throne of grace boldly because of our union with Jesus, it must still be done reverently. Here's how Hebrews 12 words this coming before God in public worship in the ESV: **“let us offer to God acceptable worship** [There's the Regulative Principle of Worship – it's got to be acceptable to God. “let us offer to God acceptable worship”], **with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.**” (Heb. 12:28-29) Do you see the connection? People think that it was only in the old days that God was a consuming fire, but 1 Corinthians 11 says that a number of people had died in that congregation and many were weak and sick, precisely because our God continues to be a consuming fire. We must learn what it means to approach Him acceptably in public worship.

## II. The place of the ark – God-centered worship

Back to 2 Samuel 6, the second thing that we notice was the place of the ark. We have already seen that wherever the ark of the covenant was, the people gathered for worship. And David was bringing the ark to Jerusalem as a testimony that the whole nation was subject to God's throne. Verse 2:

**2Samuel 6:2 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, whose name is called by the Name, the LORD [or Yahweh] of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim.**

There were images of two Cherubim angels on the ark, and the text says that God dwelt between the Cherubim. So the placing of the ark at the center of worship was the making of God at the center of worship. All Biblical worship is God-centered. And this is yet another reason why we should hold to the regulative principle of worship – it is God that is being worshipped, not us - so we should ask Him what He wants. This may be a silly illustration, but if you were going to honor your wife by cooking supper for her, you would likely try to find out what she likes, right? If she doesn't like candlelight, you probably won't do a candlelight supper. If she hates broccoli, you aren't going to cook broccoli, even if it is your favorite food. In fact, it doesn't count that you have served her one food she likes (pickles) if all of the other dozen items of food on the table are only your favorites. People would think that you were pretty self-centered and had made a special meal for *yourself* rather than for your wife. It's all about you.

Well, in a similar way, since God is the one who is being worshipped, it makes sense that we would ask God how He wants to be worshipped. And of course, He has told us in detail in the Bible. And yet you will still find people who think that is so legalistic and so restrictive. They think, "Why can't we worship in ways that make *us* feel good?" But who is at the center in that statement? It's us. It's not God. In seeker-sensitive churches it is a little different. Everyone is sacrificing for evangelism, and is gearing the service to be sensitive to and to please unbelievers who might visit. I was at one PCA church that very self-consciously took out anything that might be confusing unbelievers, including references to blood, repentance, mentioning of judgment in hymns, or the Lord's Table (which is exclusionary) – they took it all out of the worship service on Sunday morning. They feared that unbelievers wouldn't understand the judgmental aspects of such passages, and said that they would still have the Lord's Supper and would still teach those other things, but they would reserve that teaching and practice for a midweek meeting. During the Sunday morning

worship they wanted every aspect of the worship to be seeker sensitive. And this pastor told us how every minute was crafted to be seeker sensitive. Who is at the center of that worship? It's not God or God's throne. It's unbelievers. Some churches will not allow your children to sit with you past a certain point in the worship because children are too distracting from worship. In each of those scenarios, it is man and man's desires that regulate worship, not God and God's desires. Colossians calls this will worship – at least in the King James Version. Other versions translate it as “self-imposed worship,” “self-ordered worship,” or “self-regulated worship.” But I prefer the literal rendering of will worship, or as some translate it, worship that springs from man's will. So when you hear that term “will worship” in the literature, it is the opposite of the Regulative Principle of Worship (or what I am going to call RPW for short this morning). In other words, it is worship that originates in our will rather than in God's will (as revealed in the Scripture). The heart of RPW is that worship must be God-centered.

### **III. Four innovations with respect to the ark – the Regulative Principle of Worship versus “will worship” (“his error”)**

And God is jealous of how He is worshipped. Almost all commentators agree that there were at least four innovations that David had made in this chapter. Verse 7 mentions the error of Uzzah in touching the ark, but let me read you five verses from 1 Chronicles 15 that fills out what the other innovations were. 1 Chronicles 15, beginning at verse 11.

**1Chronicles 15:11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites: for Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab.**

**1Chronicles 15:12 He said to them, “You *are* the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel to *the place* I have prepared for it.**

**1Chronicles 15:13 For because you *did not do it* the first *time*, the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order.”**

**1Chronicles 15:14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.**

**1Chronicles 15:15 And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.**

The judgment of God fell because Israel had violated four Biblical laws. Let me list them for you. First, Deut. 10:8; 31:9; Numb. 4:1-20 all made clear that the ark was to be carried by the Levites alone. In fact, look at verse 2 of 1 Chronicles 15. **“Then David said, ‘No one may carry the ark**

**of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.”** So back when the ceremonial law was around, this was one of the laws that God gave. And the second time around, David realized that this was his first error. God wanted officers that He had appointed to carry the ark and to lead in other aspects of worship. The lay people cannot do what God has committed to officers. So when David allowed others to help them carry the ark, it was a direct violation of God’s law. When PCA churches have women serving communion or children reading Scripture, they are violating RPW.

Verse 15 shows the correction of the second error. It says, **“And the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.”** Exodus 25 and Numbers 4 both specified that the ark was to be built with rings on it through which poles could be inserted, and the Levites were to carry the ark on their shoulders by means of those poles so that no one would get too close to the ark. And you might think, “What’s the big deal? What difference does it make if it is carried on an ox cart or carried on poles? For crying out loud, let’s not get so persnickety!” In fact, they probably got the idea of carrying the ark on a brand new ox cart because that was what the Philistines had done when they sent the ark back to Israel (1Sam. 6:7 with 2Sam. 6:3-4). It was a miraculous carrying of the ark – let’s start carrying it that way. It worked just fine back then, why can’t it work just fine now? In fact, it may have seemed a bit more fancy and honoring to God to put the ark on such a vehicle rather than the old fashioned way of carrying the ark on poles. But God wants all such innovations reformed and brought back to the old paths if we are to have His favor. It is no wonder to me that God’s blessing is not on the American church when we consider how so much of modern worship comes from the wisdom of man, not the wisdom of God. If God says put it on poles, David learned that we better put it on poles. The point for us in the modern church is not about the ark or poles (neither of which we have, because the ceremonial law has passed away) but to follow the worship laws that remain completely, not adding to them or taking away from them.

The third innovation was that Numbers 4 makes it very clear that the ark was to be completely covered when it was carried (see Numb 4:5-6,12). This was to protect God’s people from seeing it or touching it. But in both 2 Samuel 6 and in 1 Chronicles 13, the ark was not covered, and Uzzah was able to touch it directly, resulting in his death. Since only Uzzah was judged by God, it appears that he may have led in the innovations.

The fourth innovation was that Numbers 4 warned the Israelites four times (Numb. 4:15,19,20) not to ever touch the ark on any account. But if you look at 1 Chronicles 13, you will see that Uzzah violated that law as well. Let's read verses 9 and 10.

**1Chronicles 13:9 And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen stumbled.**

**1Chronicles 13:10 Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzza, and He struck him because he put his hand to the ark; and he died there before God.**

Can God ever get angry with believers? Steve Brown says "No." He claims that it is contrary to grace for God to get angry at us no matter how we sin or defy Him. But here is a passage where God got angry with a person that he had richly blessed for decades. He was a believer who had previously been richly blessed by God. If you study the Pentateuch you will find that God got angry with Moses. And He continues to get angry with people who deliberately violate His law, no matter how sincere they may be. And this *did* seem so sincere and so innocent. Uzzah was doing what was needed to keep the ark from falling to the ground. You wouldn't want that ark broken to splinters would you? But it wouldn't have been in danger of falling to the ground if Uzzah had followed God's orders on who could carry the ark, how they would carry it, and how it was to be covered. So when the stumbling happened, and Uzzah touched the ark to balance it, God's fiery judgment flared out of it against him.

And God has given one example of a judgment in every major period of redemptive history (with Aaron's two sons being killed in the time of Moses, with Uzzah being killed in the time of David, and with Ananias and Sapphira being killed in the book of Acts) to cause His people to realize that our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He doesn't slay everybody who engages in will worship. He just occasionally illustrates how serious will worship is. He calls upon Christians in every age to reform their worship.

And I know this sounds legalistic to the American Church, but the more you meditate on God's holiness and His hatred for sin, the more you grow to realize that we cannot judge Him. David got angry at God in 2 Samuel 6 for making a big deal about tiny details. But after seeing the incredible blessings that came upon the household of Obed-Edom, he decided that it was he himself, not God, who needed to adjust his attitudes. Our God continues to be a consuming fire according to Hebrews, but we can approach His throne boldly if we will do it as those united to Jesus (that's



grace) and if we will do it in the way that He dictates (that's law). And the ark of the covenant is an illustration of the fact that you cannot separate law and grace. The two tablets on which the original ten commandments were written were placed inside of that ark (that's law) and the cover was sprinkled with blood (that's grace). Don't ever think that grace makes it unimportant to live by God's law. Instead, grace enables us to keep God's law with joy.

#### **IV. Musical instruments and the ark – the joy of worship**

And joy is the fourth area of reform that needs to be present in worship. God is not glorified by making worship as joyless and drab as we possibly can. And unfortunately, many people who claim to believe in RPW have robbed the services of joy. And there are two points that relate to this joy. The first is point IV - musical instruments. Verse 5 says,

**2Samuel 6:5** Then David and all the house of Israel played *music* before the LORD on all kinds of *instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals.*

Interestingly, there are some RPW people who say that the use of musical instruments in 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 was condemned by God. In fact, I have read scores of books that claim that God hated musical instruments in the Old Testament, and only put up with them to accommodate their childishness. They don't realize that that statement completely contradicts their principle of RPW. And I view it as a slander of God. According to them, 2Samuel 6, 1Chronicles 13,15, and Amos 5:6 all condemn David's use of unauthorized music. Their argument is that "*all Israel* played music" here, whereas 1 Chronicles 15:16 says that when David corrected what was wrong, only "*the Levites...* [were appointed] to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music." But if you look at the grammar of even that verse you will see that the Levites were accompanied with music, implying that at least some non-Levites were playing. But anyway, they say that God disapproved of David's unauthorized use of instruments in this passage. Their claim is that only Levites may play instruments because this was part of the ceremonial law, and with the death of Jesus, all ceremonial law, including musical instruments have been abolished. If you have been told this, I want to give you a verse that is often overlooked that shows that David was not in sin here. He was authorized to use these instruments, and he was not a Levite. Turn to 2 Chronicles 29:25. This describes a revival under Hezekiah.

**2Chronicles 29:25** And he stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, according

**to the commandment of David, of Gad the king's seer, and of Nathan the prophet; for thus *was* the commandment of the LORD by His prophets.**

And some who are aware of this verse will say, "See, it was the Levites who played instruments." But they are missing six very salient facts: 1) First, the Levites weren't the only ones who played instruments in 1 Chronicles 15, the chapter where the worship was completely reformed. That chapter makes clear that all Israel still played on instruments. Those books conveniently leave verse 28 out. We used to have shakers that kids could play in imitation of this. And I wouldn't mind returning to that at some point. Psalm 68 authorizes women to play instruments in both the tabernacle and in the synagogues. It is simply not true that only Levites played instruments. They were the leaders. 2) Secondly, this passage overturns the arguments of those who say that the new instruments that David invented were unauthorized. That's the claim of some. But this passage says that those newly invented instruments came by the commandment of God. 3) Another problem with this theory is that musical instruments predated the ceremonial law and are nowhere said to be part of the ceremonial law in the Bible. 4) The fourth problem that I have with this theory is that none of the parallel passages condemn Israel when all Israel played. In fact, as I have already mentioned, the same instruments that were played on the day Uzzah was killed were played at the later authorized worship that God blessed. 5) The fifth problem I have with this theory is that David was not a Levite, and there are psalms that call upon even Gentiles to play on instruments in worship. If it was strictly Levitical, Gentiles would not have been able to play on it. 6) And finally, Ephesians 5:19 repeats the command to use musical instruments in worship. Here is the literal translation of Ephesians 5:19: **"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing an instrument from your heart to the Lord."** If you look all of the secular and religious Greek literature in the two hundred years before Christ and the two hundred years after Jesus, this was the meaning of the term – to play instruments. In fact, the word "Psalm" itself means a song accompanied by a musical instrument in both the Old Testament Hebrew and the New Testament Greek. So there are actually two references to instruments in that verse. And there are many other reasons that could be given why playing on instruments is a continuing command in worship.

And by the way, the phrase, "all kinds of instruments" opens up any musical instruments as an option. So I would respond to those a cappella people who oppose the use of instruments as being sinful, that they are the

ones who are really violating the law of God by taking away a command to play instruments and by adding a requirement that all singing must be a cappella, when there is no such command in the Bible. They need to reform their worship.

## V. **Outward expressions of joy and the ark – worshipping with our whole being**

But they could point the finger right back at us and say that we aren't consistent – that we can't take the reference to instruments and leave out the reference to dancing. In fact, I have a number of books that say that. They say that if you are going to allow instruments then you can't oppose dancing. Their assumption is that we won't like dancing so we will throw out instruments too. But take a look at verse 14:

**2Samuel 6:14 Then David danced before the LORD with all *his* might; and David *was* wearing a linen ephod.**

It's the same context of worship – his dancing was “before the LORD,” and he engaged in it with all his might. He was putting heart and soul into worship – actually, he was putting heart, soul *and body* into worship. And we Presbyterians don't often think about the use of our body in worship. We treat facial expressions (for example) and bodily postures (such as slouching in worship) as being irrelevant. And so I want to think a bit about the outward expressions of joy that the Bible either commands or gives permission to use.

Those who oppose instruments frequently do so by saying that we must worship in spirit and in truth (agreed), and then claiming that anything physical is not spiritual (I disagree). For them, musical instruments are by definition not spiritual because they are physical, and therefore musical instruments carnal. But to illustrate the error of this thinking, let me first of all point out that in the 1700s, many churches took this viewpoint to its full logical extent and said that anything audible had to be removed from worship because the spiritual must only be engaged within the spirit. It took Benjamin Keach's extensive writings to the Baptists in the 1700's to convince them that singing out loud was spiritual. Many of them took Ephesians 5:19 as a proof that both playing instruments and singing must be in the heart, or silent. The Quakers said that we should be quiet in worship, and many of them didn't even have preaching. They just sat there waiting for the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts. They were being more consistent with this false idea that spiritual is in opposition to physical or outward because the vocal chords are physical.

But what does Scripture command us to do? Psalm 33:3 says, “**Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.**” Psalm 47:1 says, “**Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!**” Psalm 98 says, “**Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.**” He wants us to break out of our shells and to shout in at least some of our singing. Were there Psalms that called for sorrow and repentance and were much more subdued? Yes. And we have those in every service. But there was also a place for exuberance and clapping. Some people get nervous when members say “Amen” out loud. But 1 Corinthians 14 tells us to “say” Amen. It’s not enough to think “Amen” within our spirits. It is perfectly appropriate (in fact, it is commanded several times) for that Amen to vibrate our very physical vocal chords and make their way out into the service.

What about our hands? Why does Psalm 28, 63, 119, and other Psalms call us to lift up our hands during prayer and during the singing of Psalms of prayer and praise? Why does Psalm 134:2 command, “**Lift up your hands *in the sanctuary*, and bless the LORD**”? Is that something purely ceremonial that is done away with by the New Testament? That’s what the churches that Benjamin Keach was writing against said. They thought it was all ceremonial, and that we don’t do that anymore. Well, they didn’t read the New Testament very carefully. 1 Timothy 2:8 says, “**I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.**” There’s no change there. Paul himself commands us to do something with our bodies. And to those who think that using our bodies in worship is not spiritual, I would have them turn to Romans 12:1-2. Romans 12 doesn’t just call upon us to offer up our spirits in worship, as if we were Greek dualists who disdained the body. No. Paul said that the very offering up of our bodies is a spiritual act of worship. Let me read it to you from the ESV, which renders the verse more literally: “**to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God** [there’s that RPW term – “acceptable to God”], **which is your spiritual worship.**” And the word for “worship” is *latreia*, from which we get the word “liturgy.” It’s the word for public worship. That verse is clear – our *bodies* must be offered up to God as a spiritual *act* of worship, as the NIV translates it.

In other words, we aren’t Greek Gnostics who think the body is irrelevant. The Gnostics hated their bodies so much that they denied that our bodies would even be raised. Their interpretation of the 1 Corinthians 15 reference to our resurrection body being a “spiritual body” was that it wouldn’t be a body. That’s not an interpretation; that’s a denial of one of the

two terms. Spiritual body doesn't deny the body-ness of our resurrection bodies anymore than it denies the spiritualness of those bodies. That's a false dichotomy. Paul says that the goal of our lives is to have our bodies be 100% spiritual. The Orthodox Christian argument against the Gnostics of ancient history was to say that our heavenly bodies will be totally controlled by the Holy Spirit. *That's* what makes them spiritual. Just to use an analogy, a steam engine is not an intangible, invisible engine made up of steam. No, it is a very tangible engine that is powered by steam. And a spiritual body is not a body made up of spirit; it is a body controlled by the Spirit. And so Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that in heaven, the goal of God's grace will be achieved, and that goal is that we will eventually have spiritual bodies that are totally under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But even now we need to be moving toward that goal by daily offering our body parts up to God as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13), and Romans 12 says that our bodies must be very active in spiritual worship. No dichotomy there.

So we are not Gnostics. But some people in our Regulative Principle of Worship camp act as if they are Gnostics. And if not Gnostics, their only good reason for not making their bodies servants to their spirits is avoiding looking like someone else. I have books that say that we shouldn't kneel in worship. But they don't appeal to Scripture. Instead, they say that we can't do this because Roman Catholics kneel. OK, Roman Catholics sit and stand too. Are you going to quit sitting and standing because they do it? If so, you won't be able to worship at all because you won't be able to kneel, sit, or stand. The fact of the matter is that the Bible commands us to kneel. Psalm 95:6 says, "**Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.**" And it doesn't have to only be when the whole church kneels. You will notice that some in our congregation occasionally feel led to kneel during a song. Bowing down and kneeling is making our body appropriately mirror our spirit's humility when we confess our sins or when we are in awe of God's holiness. And if it is commanded in Scripture it can hardly be sin. Yet RPW advocates sometimes treat it as sin.

The same books say that we shouldn't raise our hands, because the Charismatics do it. Ironically, their worship is being regulated by what Charismatics do and is thus a man-centered worship. It's will worship. They talk against will worship, but they engage in it themselves. That's not the Regulative Principle of Worship. Later in this chapter, David didn't care what Michal thought of him. In verse 16 it says that she despised him for not being dignified when he danced - at least in her opinion it wasn't dignified. But David persisted in God's form of worship because he was offering up

his body before the Lord. Avoiding Michal's bad judgment was not the center of his worship. Look at verses 20-23 or 2 Samuel 6:

**2Samuel 6:20 Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"**

**2Samuel 6:21 So David said to Michal, "*It was* before the LORD, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel. Therefore I will play *music* before the LORD.**

**2Samuel 6:22 And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maidservants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honor."**

**2Samuel 6:23 Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.**

A lot of these issues really revolve around shame of what other people will think of us. But if we really believe in the Regulative Principle of Worship, we will allow our bodies to be involved in worship as well as our spirits.

Now, to give balance, let me say that some people go to the opposite extreme and they become man-centered by judging people who aren't lifting their hands or who aren't dancing. David is the only one mentioned as dancing here. I can guarantee you that the people carrying the ark weren't dancing. And so on this issue we can go to one of two man-centered extremes. We can be a Michal who judges a David for seeming to be inappropriate or we can be the dancer who judges others for not being spiritual when they don't dance. So let me give a principle that will help all of us to find balance and will enable us to give liberty to each other on the issues that Scripture gives liberty. And in case you were wondering, the Scripture gives liberty on the last issues we have talked about.

The principle is this: can you find the command in the Pentateuch? (That's the first five books of the Bible.) Why would that principle be important? Deuteronomy 4:2 says that we may not add to any law given in the first five books of the Bible. That verse means that the Pentateuch contains all ethics for the church. All other commandments given in the Bible are simply clarifications of or amplifications or reiterations of the moral principles in the Pentateuch. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says that the Old Testament is sufficient to thoroughly equip the man of God for *every good work*. There is not a single good work, including the good works of worship, that you can't find in the Old Testament. And more specifically,

Deuteronomy 4:2 says that the first five books of the Bible contain a complete ethical system. If you add even one moral commandment to the Pentateuch, you are really engaged in legalism. Luke said in Acts 26 that Paul was teaching “**no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come**” (Acts 26:22). That’s why he challenged the Bereans to check out everything he said from the Old Testament (Acts 17). Even the new commandment given by Jesus was not new as to moral precept. And the reason we know that is that the Pentateuch commanded us to love one another too. The newness of Christ’s command was that you love one another “*as I have loved you.*” Jesus was the first person to perfectly love and perfectly keep the law, so for the first time in human history we have a perfect model to imitate - Jesus. That’s why John says that this command to love one another is a new commandment in one sense, but in another sense it is “**not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another**” (2 John 5). So the principle that gives us balance is that everything we need for worship can be found in the Pentateuch, including that the Messiah will eventually abolish ceremonial law.

So with that as a background, I would say that if any aspect of worship is illustrated in the first five books of the Old Testament rather than being commanded, then such kinds of worship are encouraged for all, but not mandated for all. Does that make sense? So, instruments in worship was encouraged for all in the Pentateuch, but not commanded for all. So you can still have a public worship service even if there are no people gifted to play instruments and you sing a cappella. But where instrumentalists are available, the Bible calls upon us to use them. So the command is to the church as a whole, not to each individual.

Likewise, the Pentateuch illustrates the raising of hands, but does not command them for all. So Paul says that he desires men to raise their hands in prayer, but does not mandate it.

But all are commanded to sing. All are commanded to say “Amen” at the conclusion of a benediction, prayer, or blessing. There is a difference between being commanded to do something in worship and having permission to do something in worship.

So the question comes, does the Scripture merely permit dancing, or does it command dancing? I would say that since the Pentateuch only *illustrates* dancing in worship (Exodus 15:20), but doesn’t command it, the later commands in Psalm 149 to “**let them praise His name with the**

**dance**” are commands to permit it to happen – that’s what “let” means. As a congregation, we need to give permission to people to dance before the Lord – that’s the “let them... dance” and we need to give permission to people who want to express their joy in other ways to do so without feeling judged either. So if Joel desires to dance, Psalm 149 says to let him dance. Just don’t knock anybody over when you do it. Let him is different from you must. You all have permission to dance, but I know some of you will not do it, but will express your worship bodily in other ways. That’s OK. Julie will continue to give her “Amen,” and that’s great. But if we see all law as bound up in the Pentateuch, it helps us to have the balance you see in the picture. Some were dancing in that picture and some were not.

And as to the claim that dancing was part of the ceremonial law and was done away with, I have never seen a shred of evidence for that. People will say it, but I have never seen them appeal to Scripture to prove it. And what seems so odd to me is that all of these books that are opposed to instruments, kneeling, raising hands, and dancing, use this passage to teach that we must not add to or take away from God’s principles of worship or we will be judged, yet they refuse to let David be a model. They add to God’s law by mandating the absence of certain things (that are nowhere mandated in the Bible - so that's legalism), and they take away from God’s law by ignoring certain things (that the Bible clearly commands - so that's antinomianism). And as Jesus illustrated with the Pharisees, legalism always leads to some form of antinomianism. The Scriptures call us to RPW - to not add to or take away from God's instructions on worship. When prejudice governs worship, then worship needs reforming.

## **VI. Distaste for God’s attitudes and the ark – the call to submit to God’s kingship**

And this is where the next point comes up. If you turn to 1Chronicles 13 you will see that David is shocked by God’s judgment of Uzzah. He doesn’t like it. God took all of the wind out of his sails and all of the joy out of his worship. You could say that David thought that God was being a kill-joy here. It’s 1 Chronicles 13:11-14.

**1Chronicles 13:11** And David became angry because of the LORD’S outbreak against Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez Uzza to this day.

**1Chronicles 13:12** David was afraid of God that day, saying, “How can I bring the ark of God to me?”

**1Chronicles 13:13** So David would not move the ark with him into the City of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite.



**1Chronicles 13:14 The ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.**

David became angry. Yes verse 12 speaks of fear in there too, but verse 11 says that he became angry. He had no stomach for God's legalistic attitudes in worship. Oh, wait a minute! God by definition can't be a legalist, can He? But I think all of us have experienced David's gut reaction from time to time. What God wants is sometimes so out of touch with what we want, that we withdraw. And whether David realized it or not, when he withdrew from the ark of the covenant, he was withdrawing from God's throne, and therefore was withdrawing from God's kingship. In a sense he was rejecting God's kingship over worship. In effect he was saying that if I can't worship God my way, I won't worship at all. It was David who was regulating worship, not God. But David learned to value God's ark when he saw that God was pouring our blessings upon those who came before Him.

But at the very heart of the Regulative Principle of Worship is submission to God's Kingship over worship. Are we willing to have His ark or His throne in our worship? Hebrews calls us in public worship to come boldly before the throne of grace. That's a reference to the ark of the covenant in heaven. David didn't need to be afraid. The ark was a throne of grace to all who approached it humbly. And it was not until David humbly submitted to worshipping God in God's way that his full joy was restored and he approached that throne boldly. And 1 Chronicles 15 shows the incredible joy of David and God's people. It was once again a public worship service with God's presence as they served communion in verses 18-19 of 2 Samuel 6. But 1 Chronicles 13:3 describes the absence of God's special presence prior to that. And in the same way, the book of Revelation tells the church in Laodicea that Jesus was not even present in their worship services. They thought they had the most wonderful worship, yet Jesus said that he was ready to vomit them out. Revelation 3:17 says,

**Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from me...**

And then he goes on to list things that they already thought they had. But they had not been getting them from God; they had not been going to the throne of grace. Instead, they had been getting them from man's wisdom, man's finances, man's counsel, and man's healing. It was a man-centered church, not a God centered one. And so Jesus left the church. But I find it so

encouraging that Jesus at least knocked on the church door and offered a restoration of His presence. He said,

**Revelation 3:20** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Jesus was outside of that church knocking on the door of the church, and anyone who was focused on Jesus, heard His voice, and opened the door to Him in worship, would find Jesus coming in and eating the sacrament with him. Like David, that anyone who had ears to hear was worshipping with an audience of One. He was listening for Christ's voice and focusing on Christ. And because his focus was not on what other's thought, Christ promised to reenter the church and to eat and drink with him in the Lord's Table. Submission to Christ's Kingship brings restored joy, fulfillment, and fellowship.

## **VII. The blessing of Obed-Edom in the presence of the ark – God's purpose of blessing**

And that's point VII - the presence of the ark brings blessing. Submission to God's throne brings blessing. Let's read 2 Samuel 6:11-13.

**2Samuel 6:11** The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months. And the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

**2Samuel 6:12** Now it was told King David, saying, "The LORD has blessed the house of Obed-edom and all that *belongs* to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David with gladness.

Too many people think God's law robs us of joy. The reality is that 1 John says that our cup of joy is full to overflowing when we abandon lawlessness and when we walk in the light. God's design is to bless, and Obed-Edom and his entire household were so blessed by being constantly in the presence of God's throne that David envied him. He wanted to have that blessing. It was the realization that God's purpose is not to sour us but to bring us joy that changed David's attitudes. He went from being angry and uninterested in approaching God's throne to approaching it with gladness. And it helps us in our worship to realize that God's purpose in the Gospel is primarily good news, even though the bad news of judgment is present to those who approach His throne apart from grace.

## **VIII. A description of the ark – everything flows through Jesus**

And what I want to end with is a brief description of the Ark of the Covenant itself. It's a lovely picture of Jesus. It was made of Acacia wood,

representing the humanity of Jesus and was overlaid with gold, representing the Deity of Jesus. We come into God's presence only through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the blood that was sprinkled on the ark represents the shed blood of Jesus who makes access to God possible. God's holiness required Christ's death so that we might live and have joy in God's presence. That's what you can get from the story of Uzzah – the holiness of God required Christ's death (as our substitute) so that we might live and have joy in God's presence. So in effect, the ark was a picture of Jesus. When we are Jesus-centered in worship we automatically become God centered. It was sometimes called the Mercy Seat because through Jesus we all receive mercy even though we violate God's laws quite regularly. It was sometimes called the Throne of Grace because it represented God's rule through Christ over all the earth, and that God's kingdom is a kingdom of grace that will transform all things by grace.

But what was in the ark was symbolic as well. I've already mentioned the ten commandments were in there. That reminds us that we are approaching a holy God. But it also reminds us of Christ's Kingship. He is a King who rules with His law, and when we value that law, we value His Kingship. You can't receive Jesus as Savior without also receiving Him as Lord and King of your life.

The second thing in there (or actually attached to the outside of the ark) was a complete copy of the Scriptures as the Scriptural canon grew. Those Scriptures portray Jesus as a Prophet who brings God's Word. He is the Word. And as God's prophet Jesus calls us to value all of God's Scriptures. As Jesus said, "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**" (Matt 4:5)

The next thing in the ark was Aaron's rod that blossomed. This represents God's delegation of leadership to humans, and it reminds us of Korah's rebellion against Aaron and the Levites and their role in worship. Korah wanted to use the incense and offer sacrifice and lead in worship, and he was judged for it. Jesus has His representatives, and those who rebel against legitimate authority structures rebel against Jesus Himself. It's all a part of the Regulative Principle of Worship.

The last thing in the ark was the pot of manna, representing the kind of close fellowship and nourishment that God would give to His people. And the book of Revelation promises, "**To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.**" This means that in the New Covenant, God promises to usher us into greater intimacy and fellowship with Him than

David or even the high priest had. They were not allowed to eat of that hidden manna. Yet that manna pointed to the perfect communion that God the Son had with God the Father, and in the New Covenant we have been called into the fellowship of His Son. Coming before the throne of grace involves receiving all that was symbolized by that ark: Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King.

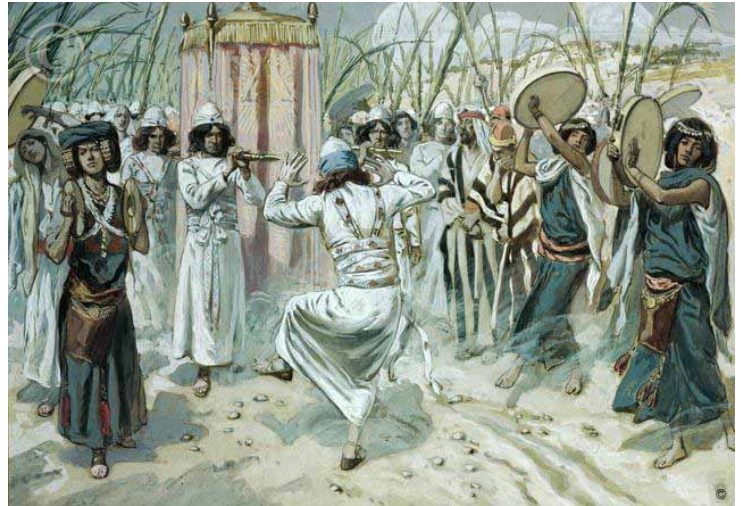
Our hearts need reforming if any of the aspects of God's throne are not embraced and welcomed. And of course, Jesus provides what He commands. If we will drink of Him, we can experience worship and joy in God's presence that others have not dreamed of. Let's adjust our hearts to God's throne rather than asking God to adjust His attitudes to us. Amen.

## Reforming Worship

### 2 Samuel 6:1-23

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 9-23-2012

Introduction – context of worship (“before the LORD”)



I. The gathering to the ark – public versus private worship

II. The place of the ark – God-centered worship

III. Four innovations with respect to the ark – the Regulative Principle of Worship versus “will worship” (“his error”)

IV. Musical instruments and the ark – the joy of worship

V. Outward expressions of joy and the ark – worshipping with our whole being

VI. Distaste for God’s attitudes and the ark – the call to submit to God’s kingship

VII. The blessing of Obed-Edom in the presence of the ark – the blessing of true worship

VIII. A description of the ark – everything flows through Jesus