

**HOW
SHOULD
WE THEN
LIVE?**

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April 15, 2012

Sermon in a sentence: Many choices and options stand before us, forcing us to make some very critical decisions about the way we choose to live.

Scripture: Psalm 84

A young boy, Samuel, was born as a result of the prayer of a desperate woman (1 Sam. 1:20).

His life was totally dedicated to God and at a young age God began speaking through him as a prophet.

His first message was a message of judgment against his boss Eli and Eli's family that had gone astray from the ways of God (1 Sam. 3:11-14).

One day, Israel went to battle against the Philistines and lost about 4,000 men (1 Sam. 4:2).

They returned to camp and decided they needed to have the Ark of the Lord with them to ensure victory in the next battle. When it arrived, they shouted and rejoiced with such force that the earth shook and frightened the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:5-8).

However, in the ensuing battle, Israel lost again and 30,000 soldiers were killed (1 Sam. 4:10). Along with the soldiers, Eli, Hophni, Phinehas and his wife also died and Samuel's prophecy was fulfilled (1 Sam. 4:17-20).

Option for living #1: Be a part of God's kingdom, live like pagans and receive the judgment of God

The Ark of the Lord was captured by the Philistines and placed in the house of their god Dagon. The presence of the Ark destroyed Dagon, and for seven months, it wreaked havoc in Philistia. Finally, in desperation, the Philistines put it on a cart hooked up to a couple of cows who had recently calved, to see if they would ignore their offspring and take the Ark of the Lord to Beth-shemesh in Israel. If they did so, the Philistines would know for certain that it had been the hand of God against them (1 Sam. chs. 5&6).

Option for living #2: Be a part of the enemies of God and live under His wrath.

When the Ark arrived in Beth-shemesh, the men desecrated it by opening it up to look inside. The judgment of God fell and 50,070 of them died (1 Sam. 6:19)- (far more than had died under the hand of the Philistines!)

Option for living #3: Be a part of God's kingdom, but treat Him in a casual, disrespectful manner

“The men of Beth-shemesh said, **“Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?”** (1 Sam. 6:20). They quickly made a deal with the people of Kirjath-jearim and had them come to pick up the Ark. It was kept there for the next 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2).

In the meantime, David became king and decided it was time to move the Ark back to Jerusalem. He met with all the leaders of Israel and they decided to go down to Kirjath-jearim (or Baale-judah) with 30,000 chosen men plus other interested people, to escort the Ark back to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:1-2). To be sure, he told them to ‘c.c.’ the priests and Levites about their plans (1 Ch. 13:2), but they were not part of the planning team!

They carried the Ark the wrong way, disaster struck and Uzzah died because of his irreverence in touching the Ark (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

Option for living #4: Worship God in a manner of our own choosing, while at the same time disobeying His word

“David was afraid of God that day; and he said, “How can the ark of the Lord come to me?”” (2 Sam. 6:9)

2 Samuel 6:10-11 (NASB) And David was unwilling to move the ark of the Lord into the city of David with him; but David took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11 Thus 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.

After all the disasters we have seen, God blessed this man Obed-edom and his whole household in such an incredible way that after only three short months, the news of his great blessing reached the ears of David (2 Sam. 6:12a).

Who was this man Obed-edom and why was he so highly favoured?

The first thing we note about him is that he was a Gittite. The Gittites were Philistines from Gath, the birthplace of Goliath (1 Sam. 17:23). David had developed a very close relationship with them during the time he was fleeing from Saul and actually live with Achish the king of Gath for a number of years (1 Sam. 29:3), eventually being promoted to the position of the king’s personal bodyguard (1 Sam. 28:2)!

In fact, when David returned to Israel to be crowned king, 600 Gittites packed up their families and belongings and went back with him (2 Sam. 15:18).

These Philistines had come to the understanding that the God of Israel was the only true God and that David was His chosen king. Despite all the years of wars and hostilities that had taken place between Israel and Philistia, they chose to take their stand with the people of God and serve Him only!

And so, in a rather strange twist, David placed the Ark of the Lord, the representation of the living presence of the Almighty God of Israel, in the house of a 'stranger' who was neither a priest nor a Levite, nor even someone from a prominent Israelite family.

What Obed-edom had, (which we all need), is a love and respect for God that went beyond his history, background, homeland, religion, ethnicity or social standing. He had chosen to leave everything behind to serve God, and God blessed him.

Option for living #5: Leave our past behind, follow after God whole-heartedly and receive His blessings

Many would be happy to be where Obed-edom was – in a place of blessing. However, Obed-edom thought it best to go beyond just receiving blessings to *becoming* a blessing to God and His work.

After the chronicler lists the Levites who were part of the worship team that accompanied the Ark to Jerusalem, he mentions that

“Obed-edom and Jehiah also were gatekeepers for the ark” (1 Ch. 15:24)!

What does this mean? It means that Obed-edom left his home yet again, followed the Ark to Jerusalem and became a servant of the Tabernacle – as close to the presence of God as he could possibly be.

He quickly and willingly left the place of God’s abundant blessing to become a servant – as close as possible to the presence of God.

Option for living #6: Go beyond simply receiving blessings from God to becoming a blessing to God and His people

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So let us review the various options available to us:

- **Be a part of God’s kingdom, live like pagans and receive the judgment of God (Hophni and Phinehas)**
- **Be a part of the enemies of God and live under His wrath (Philistines)**
- **Be a part of God’s kingdom, but treat him in a casual, disrespectful manner (Beth-shemeshites)**
- **Worship God in a manner of our own choosing, while at the same time disobeying His word (David and Uzzah),**

OR

- **Leave our past behind, follow after God wholeheartedly and receive His blessings (Obed-edom)**
 - **Go beyond simply receiving blessings *from* God to becoming a blessing *to* God and His people.**
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Psalm 84:1-12 (NASB)

For the Choir Director; on the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah***

**A harp David brought from Gath*

*** Descendants of Korah who rebelled against Moses and was swallowed by the earth (Num. 16).*

1 How lovely are Your dwelling places, O Lord of hosts!

2 My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

3 The bird also has found a house, And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, Even Your altars, **O Lord of hosts**, My King and my God.

4 How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You. **Selah.**

5 How blessed is the man whose strength is in You, In whose heart are the highways to Zion!

6 Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring; The early rain also covers it with blessings.

7 They go from strength to strength, Every one of them appears before God in Zion.

8 **O Lord God of hosts**, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob! **Selah.**

9 Behold our shield, O God, And look upon the face of Your anointed.

10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

12 **O Lord of hosts**, How blessed is the man who trusts in You!

Prayer: “Lord, help us to choose Your way over our way. Help us to treat You with the honour, dignity and respect You deserve. Help us to choose You – the blessing, rather than just settling for Your blessings. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”