

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-13 God's Law: Pass/Fail

Filipe lay on the hospital's operating table. He had been brought to the emergency room an hour earlier in extreme pain. The pain had come upon him suddenly. It started in the middle of his abdomen and then had shifted to his lower right side. Every step caused a searing pain to shoot through him. He had begun to feel nauseous. The emergency room doctor had quickly diagnosed him with acute appendicitis. Filipe needed emergency surgery. If his appendix ruptured, it would spread infection into his body, which could lead to death. The appendix would not kill him, rather the infection would.

Filipe's surgeon looked at the tray of surgical tools that had been brought to him. They had been placed in an autoclave to sterilize them. The intense heat from the pressurized steam was designed to kill all bacteria and viruses. With these instruments, the surgeon was about to open Filipe's lower abdomen. He would then locate the appendix and remove it. The surgical tools had to be sterile, that is, perfectly clean. They could not be almost clean, or partially clean. If they were not perfectly sterile, they could leave behind viruses or bacteria in the incision. This could lead to major infection and Filipe's death. When it comes to surgical tools, there is no "almost perfectly clean." The tools are either sterile, or they are not.

This concept of clean or not clean applies to God's holiness and thus to his laws. We are either obedient, or disobedient. There is no "almost" obedient or obedient in most things. We are like the surgical tools. We are either clean, or not clean. The apostle John wrote in his first letter to the churches: "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: that God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1John 1:6).

John is making a very important point. There is not the least sin or imperfection in God. God is perfect. His holiness is perfect. Thus, his law is perfect, as it reflects his holiness.

Perfection is difficult to achieve. Not only must the right thing be done, it must be done in the right way and at the right time. Should any one of these be done incorrectly, perfection is missed. King David learned this lesson in a very painful way.

Now King Saul had taken the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines. Saul and his army lost the battle and the ark was captured by the Philistines (1Sam 4:11). The Philistines thought that they had won a great victory by taking the ark. Little did they imagine that they had brought a curse upon themselves. God sent a plague on the Philistines, first in one city, then the next, then a third city. Some people died; others were afflicted with tumors. Wherever they moved the ark, the plague broke out. Finally, the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel on an oxcart (1Sam 6:11-12). The people of Israel celebrated and the Ark of the Covenant was transported by Levites to the house of Abinadab, one of King Saul's sons. There the ark would remain for 20 years (1Sam 7:1-2). Eventually Saul and his sons died in battle and David became king over all of Israel.

David conquered the city of Jerusalem and made it his capital city. It was his godly desire to bring the ark up into Jerusalem. Now through an interesting turn of Jewish ancestry, Saul's grandsons, Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were considered Levites. David chose them to move the ark to Jerusalem. The idea to move the ark to Jerusalem was appropriate. Having Levites move the ark was also correct. But the manner in which they chose to do the moving was wrong. God had given very specific instructions concerning the ark. It was not to be touched by anyone except for the high priests. It was to be moved by running two long wooden poles through rings on each of its sides. The Levites were instructed by Moses to pick up the ark by means of the poles, to carry it from place to place.

David told the house of Abinadab to bring the ark into the city. There was going to be a great celebration. But Uzzah and Ahio followed the example of the Philistines rather than the instructions of Moses. They placed the ark onto an oxcart and walked alongside the cart as it made its way towards Jerusalem. Doing the right thing, at the right time, in the wrong way is unholy! Along the road the oxen stumbled. The ark was jostled and started to tip. Uzzah reached out and touched the ark to steady it. Instantly he was struck dead by God (1Chron 13:7-10).

Why would God do this? They were all trying to do a good thing. But doing the right thing in the wrong way is not acceptable to God. God demands obedience and holiness—not 'a little bit,' or 'almost,' or 'better than most other people.' No, God's holiness is pass or fail. You are either holy or are unholy. There is no in between.

This is how God's law works. You either obey all of his laws, or you become guilty of breaking the law. We will address this in detail in your next lesson.

This lesson is **important** because it reveals to us how God's laws are like his holiness. They are pass or fail. There is no 'almost.' You either obey, or disobey.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God is perfect and our obedience must be perfect.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What happened when King David tried to move the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem on an oxcart? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, "God struck Uzzah dead, because he touched the ark," you are correct.
2. King David was trying to do a good thing in bringing the ark into Jerusalem. Why did God strike Uzzah dead? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that they were trying to do the right thing in the wrong way, you are right.
3. In what way are God's holiness and God's law alike? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered that both God's holiness and his laws are pass or fail, you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this it again until you are familiar with the story. Practice telling about King David trying to move the ark into Jerusalem, in your own words. Find someone and discuss with them this story and the nature of God's holiness and his law.