

# False Standards of Authority

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It had been over 40 years since the Ark of the Covenant was in the midst of Israel. When Eli was judge, the Philistines had captured it and brought it to Ashdod into the house of Dagon. The people of Ashdod were afflicted with tumors, so they sent the ark away by cart to the Israelite city of Beth-shemesh. There, 50,070 were struck dead for looking inside the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). That brought the ark to its resting place at the house of Abinadab in Kiriath-jearim.

Years later, King David decided it was time to bring the ark back into the midst of God's people. He put it on a new cart and led a great procession toward the city of Jerusalem. When the ox stumbled, the cart nearly turned over and Uzzah reached out to keep the ark from falling. He was struck dead on the spot.

Many people justify going beyond what the Scriptures say because they are certain God will accept their justification and reasoning. "I know this is different than what He said, but God will understand." These are false standards of authority.

"God didn't say not to." In Exodus 25:12-15, God gave specific instructions about transporting the ark. The nation was in a traveling state, and they would have to carry it along with the tabernacle. Did God say, "Do not put the ark on a cart?" He didn't have to. David later corrected his error and did it "according to the word of the Lord" (1 Chron. 15:15).

You can permit a lot of things with this false standard. Where is the passage that specifically says, "Thou shalt not have an abortion?" Does that mean God doesn't value life in the womb and permits the murder of unborn children? Or, "Thou shalt not look at pornography?" Does that mean God approves of it? Our standard must be "What does the Lord say?" not "What didn't the Lord say?"

"His heart is in the right place." Uzzah was honest and sincere. He was protecting the ark from harm. But notice that "God struck him down for his irreverence" (2 Sam. 6:7). That word is also translated "error" (NKJV, ESV) and means "hastiness, blasphemy." According to Numbers 4:15, even the sons of Kohath would die for touching the ark. That command had not changed in 500 years. Touching it was an irreverent act.

God's holiness is higher than our hearts. When you don't treat God's things as holy, you will not treat His words as holy, and then you won't regard Him as holy. That is irreverence of the highest sort.

“The leaders are OK with it.” David consulted with the wrong authority. In 1 Chron. 13:10,14, he “inquired of the Lord” concerning the battle and the battle plan. But in 13:1, he inquired of the captains, every leader, and rallied the support of all the assembly and all the people. And notice what the king admitted in 15:13: “we did not seek Him according to the ordinance.”

How do we inquire of the Lord? We ask, “What do the Scriptures say?” The question is not, “What do the elders say?” These are wise men in whom we have great confidence. But they are not the final authority. The question is not, “What does the preacher say?” He is a man of God, but he is not the judge before Whom we will stand. “That your faith should not rest in the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:1-5). If we are not inquiring of the Lord, we are following a false standard of authority.

“Others have done it this way.” Where did David get the idea of the new cart? It came from the priests of the Philistines! That was their solution when they were ready to send the ark away from their city: “prepare a new cart” (1 Sam. 6:7). After all this time, the Israelites were still fighting that same battle that led to their current system of government. “Appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). That’s why God told them to drive those nations out. They would cause them to forget their covenant with Him.

A saint is one who is sanctified, set apart, “other than.” It is not our goal to get as close to the world and certainly not to follow their example. It doesn’t matter that other churches are using instruments of music or women teachers. They are not the standard. “‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean’” (2 Cor. 6:17). God wants a peculiar people for His own possession who follow Him above all others.

David ultimately understood the right standard to follow. At first, He was angry (2 Sam. 6:8). Then, he was afraid (6:9). But his fear motivated Him to seek the Lord and His commands. May we become sons of David by refusing all false standards of authority.