

NOTES OF ADDRESSES

BY THE LATE

REV. WILLIAM C. BURNS,

MISSIONARY OF THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH TO CHINA.

EDITED BY

M. F. BARBOUR,

*Author of "The Way Home," "The Child of the Kingdom,"
"The Soul-Gatherer," &c.*

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IX.

UZZA SMITTEN.

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“AND THE ANGER OF THE LORD WAS KINDLED AGAINST UZZA, AND HE SMOTE HIM, BECAUSE HE PUT HIS HAND TO THE ARK: AND THERE HE DIED BEFORE GOD.”—*1 Chron. XIII. 10.*

THE ark was a type of Christ, and the bringing up of the ark, at the command of King David, is, in like manner, a type of the endeavours after the advancement of Christ’s kingdom. David was commanded and authorised to bring up the ark; he did it not without considering whether it were pleasing to the Lord, and to His people, and it was, doubtless, a good desire in him. But then, such good desires are many times mingled and accompanied with much sin: and we have an example of this here. David himself had apparently ordered all things concerning it; we find him gathering together all Israel, going himself among them, playing before the Lord, while the ark followed, placed in a new cart drawn by oxen, under the care of Uzza and Ahio. All of a sudden the oxen stumbled, Uzza, in eager zeal, put forth his hand to keep the ark from falling. He seemed to be doing right; he was afraid that some evil would happen to it, and therefore made what would seem to us a harmless movement, or even one worthy of the praise and approval of God; but it was not accepted, and Uzza was put to death for it. What may this not teach us concerning the jealousy of the Lord of Hosts when His glory is concerned!

It is not enough to be anxious for the coming of His kingdom. Uzza was anxious to save the ark from falling; but then he touched it not after the due order. We may, then, well tremble at being engaged in the work of the Lord; for zeal, if not according to knowledge, may bring us into rash contact with God’s glory, and that will bring us into contact with judgment too, if we work not according to the due order. “The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?”

From this, we learn that there are times when nothing but the lighting down of the Lord’s arm will do to cast us down, to chastise and humble us—times when we need to get our accursed pride brought low to the very dust. How wonderful that we should long escape this breaking forth of His power; if it should come, let us take it meekly at His hand, and learn from it

the glorious holiness and jealousy of that God who will *not* be worshipped but after the due order.

But when the ark was thus carried aside, the Lord allowed not the resting-place of His glory to be brought into contempt; He blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that he had. This seems an emblem of what often happens now; when we are zealously engaged in His work, and meet therein with some heavy rebuke from God, we are terrified and stop, and do not dare to touch it with our hands any more. Well, and does the work of God cease for that? Not so. Whether we will do it or not, whether we take a personal part in it or hold back, or even if we sit down and say that the Lord will not work any more—oh! we hear, all of a sudden, that the ark has appeared elsewhere, and that some other house than ours is blessed because of it. It is a dangerous thing in one sense to be engaged in the work of the Lord—it will lead to chastisement on account of unholy and carnal zeal! but it is equally dangerous to cease from it, for if we do, we shall lose the blessing, and perhaps not find out that we have lost it, till we see it passing us by, and lighting down upon others.

When David saw what a blessed man Obed-Edom had become, he was provoked, it would seem, to jealousy in the good work, and made arrangements for carrying it on anew. And so we shall ever find, that when visible, humbling judgments come upon us, they lay us low at the time, and then the Lord's hand again returns to lift us up in Christ Jesus. If there is to be much of the Lord's presence among us as a church, we shall see far more of this than is expected, by many who think they are longing for God's work to begin. There would, in that case, be breaches made upon us; visible judgments on the unconverted, visible judgments on believers and on congregations; and these things may be sent for many just causes, both on ministers and people; because, alas! there is much building with untempered mortar.

And were the Lord, indeed, thus to begin to work amongst us, how many would be finding out, that they had come into the ministry, and come into the eldership, and into the deacon's office, and to the communion table, *without a divine call*. And those who feel that they *have* a divine call, would be finding out, too, that judgments were coming upon *them*, because they had been taking liberties with the work of God. All would be discovering that He is not One whose ways or thoughts are as ours; but that He is a jealous God, who will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images. And yet, remember that if we, out of fear, refuse to go along with the ark, we shall get no blessing.

Let us follow Him who is the Angel of the Covenant, seeking to know well whom it is that we follow; not hastily rushing, like Uzza, of our own choice, to this or that other part of His work. Let us go where Jehovah leads;

let us pray; let us tremble to offend in the least matter, Him with whom the blessing lies. Let us seek to be continually engaged in His work, in His way, keeping in mind that we can do nothing, attempt nothing, except as He directs; and even then must it be with constant holy fear and watchfulness, lest a breach be made upon us. Yet this spirit of holy fear is almost unknown among us. Why so? Because there is so little appearance of the Lord's working. More of this would bring more of holy fear, especially upon us in the ministry. One would think, from the way in which God's service is undertaken and performed, that it was a thing any man could do whenever he pleased, instead of being a thing high above us, requiring the constant aid and direction of His Holy Spirit.

But, secondly, we see from this chapter who it was that should carry the ark. A great number of priests were chosen and appointed by God's direction, through David, to this office, and set apart solemnly for it. And in like manner, there is in the church of Christ a race set apart to do service to Him, and to carry His gospel through the world—even a royal priesthood. It consists of every true minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor is the work confined to ministers and elders. It is delivered by the Lord into the hands of the New Testament priesthood. We are thus taught that it is the bounden duty of all believers to join in this work, and also warned of the danger of admitting any into it who are not God's people, since they alone will be accepted in it. Alas! this is too often done, others are called in, and the Lord's blessing is withheld.

Their names are given here, and for many reasons, though some may be wearied by such long catalogues. One of these reasons, doubtless, is to show what a distinction it is in the eyes of the Holy One, to be employed in His service; and not only does this apply to those in the ministry, but to all who are in any way connected with His cause; for they all have this high honour from Himself, as well as a heavy responsibility laid upon them.