

## **NINETY DAYS IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD**

Today I want to tell you of a most fascinating story. It is the story of Obededom. His name "Obed" means "the servant who honors God in the right way" and "Edom" (lit. "red") means "one who causes to blush." This is the man whose life, as well as the lives of his family, was changed in the ninety days when the Ark of the Covenant of God was placed in his house.

Our story really begins several years earlier when Hophni and Phinehas, the wicked sons of Eli, believed that taking the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle would protect them from the Philistines as told to us in I Samuel 4. They were sadly mistaken. God will never be used as a superstitious good luck charm to overcompensate for the evil lives of those who attempt such a fiasco. The two sons of Eli died and when the news was brought to Eli, he was so distressed that in a state of panic he fell over backwards and died. Even Phineas' wife, upon hearing the news, was traumatically induced into labor and died in childbirth, but not before she named the child "Ichabod" meaning, "The glory is departed from Israel."

Our story resumes as we see the Philistines have captured the Ark of the Covenant and placed it in the house of Dagon, their wicked deity. I cannot resist seeing the humor, as God, whose presence is associated with the Ark, doesn't share space with any false god. Soon after the Philistines arranged this cozy connection, they woke up early the next morning to find Dagon on his face with his head and hands cut off and only "the stump" (I Samuel 5:4) remaining. The Philistines might have considered renaming their deity "stumpy" or perhaps "the headless and helpless god." God cursed the Philistines and they were struck with disease and ultimately, before they got the Ark back into the hands of Israel, 50,070 men died as recorded in I Samuel 6:19: "And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter."

Once the Ark of the Covenant was recovered, it was taken to the House of Abinadab and stayed there until David became king. David came to Abinadab's house to take the Ark to the Hill of Zion. A sad event took place on the way. While transporting the Ark, Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, had set the ark on a new cart. David and many of his people were in a celebratory mood expressed by the music on their journey. Everything seemed to be joyous until they came to Nachon's threshing floor and the oxen jolted and shook the cart. Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady the ark and God struck him dead (II Samuel 6:1-9; I Chronicles 13:1-14). To understand the story better, we must know how the Ark was designated to be carried. In Exodus 25:12-15, special rings and staves (poles) were built to carry the Ark. Numbers 4:15 says, "And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary,

as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation." We see the method was never to change as revealed in I Chronicles 15:15, "And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD." Alan Redpath commenting on this said, "God wanted the ark to be carried because He wanted nothing mechanical about the ark, representing His presence. The ark was nothing less than the burden of the Lord, and the burden of the Lord was to be carried on the hearts of the Levites. We want God's presence very much, don't we? But we like to hitch His presence to some of our new carts. We like to add Him to our list of organizations, to load Him on top of the mechanics of a busy life, and then drive. How much of our service is really in the energy of the flesh, I wonder! So often we put forth our hands, but not our hearts." Referring to Uzzah, Alexander Maclaren said, "He saw no difference between the ark and any other valuable article. His intention to help was right enough; but there was a profound insensibility to the awful sacredness of the ark, on which even its Levitical bearers were forbidden to lay hands."

In great fear David would not dare at this time take the Ark of the Covenant to the City of David, but orders it instead to the House of Obededom, a Levite living in Gath, which is why he was called a Gittite. He was only a Gittite by residency, but a Levite by genetics. For three months the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred piece of furniture on earth was in the House of Obededom. What can ninety days in the manifested presence of our Lord do for us? Let's observe what it did for Obededom.

#### 1. OBEDEDOM WAS BLESSED BEYOND MEASURE.

The Bible says in II Samuel 6:11, "And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obededom the Gittite three months: and the LORD blessed Obededom, and all his household." II Chronicles 13:14 adds, "...And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had." According to Hebrew tradition, His wife and eight daughters-in-law bore children, two every month, during the three months that the Ark remained with him. Proverbs 10:22, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it."

#### 2. OBEDEDOM'S HOUSE EMANATED WITH JOY.

II Samuel 6:12, "And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obededom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obededom into the city of David with gladness." We see that David and Israel could not take shortcuts or do things their own way when transporting the Ark (I Chronicles 15:15). And the king brought from the House of Obededom the joy of the Lord as the Bible tells us in I Chronicles 15:16, "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps

and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.” Joy is always associated with obedience. This is one reason we emphasize faithful church attendance. David said in Psalm 122:1, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” When we obey God in everything whether big or small, joy comes!

### 3. OBEDEDOM NEVER STOPPED LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.

Obededom is appointed by his fellow Levites to be one of the ones who sound forth the first notes of worship like the song director or a spiritual maestro: I Chronicles 15:21, “And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obededom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel.”

In I Chronicles 15:24 we are told, “And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obededom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark.” Immediately we are reminded of Psalm 84:10, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Obededom’s job was not just to be a doorkeeper in general; his appointment was to be a doorkeeper of the ark, which meant he was to be as close to the Ark of the Covenant as a mortal man could be.

### 4. OBEDEDOM’S DESCENDANTS NEVER LEFT THE SERVICE OF THE LORD.

From serving with King David to the building of Solomon’s Temple, the descents of Obededom were there. In I Chronicles 26: 4-8 we discover that 62 direct descendants, including the eight sons of Obededom served around the Ark of the Covenant. The Bible says, I Chronicles 26:8, “All these of the sons of Obededom: they and their sons and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, were threescore and two of Obededom.” We see that through the years the dedication and blessing of those first 90 days in the presence of God never dissipated, for these sons and grandsons maintained strength for service.

What kind of legacy shall we leave behind? Perhaps a decision to spend 90 days of dedication to be as close to the Lord as you possibly can could change everything. Deuteronomy 4:29: “But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.