

A Fearful Thing

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[0 : 00] I want to talk about fearful beings. Fearful things.

! Now, I must tell you today that we've had some fearful things happen.! We had a great big beehive in our backyard. And we had to get an apiarist to come and to deal with the bees.

And this beekeeper said that we had 30,000 bees in our backyard and some 30-odd kilos of honey in this tea chest in our backyard.

But I must tell you that those bees had been there for some 3 or 4 months. And towards the end of them being there, we just hardly noticed that they were there. You know, I used to just walk straight past this great big mass of bees and not really pay much attention to those bees because they'd been in the backyard for all that long time.

They hardly knew they were there. Whereas normally, one bee! One bee, you're scared if they come in your house and you think, oh, they're going to bite me, they're going to sting me. Now, bees are fearful beings.

[1 : 13] But after a while, I kind of lost that fear because they were there all the time. Another example of fear is fear of heights. Fear of heights.

Now, I used to probably not have a real fear of heights, but when you climb a ladder and you get so high, you start to worry about falling off and you start to wonder, oh, is this safe?

It's a bit shaky. But, you know, this building has got a very high roof in there and I'm used to climbing a ladder right to the top of that roof to fiddle around with the lights and whatnot. And I think over time, I've lost that fear of heights that I might have once had, or climbing on the roof here, it's quite high up, and I'm not as scared as I used to be.

I kind of lost that fear. We're going to talk about the fear of God to a degree today and how sometimes we can, over time, we can get so used to holy things that we lose the fear of them.

We lose the sense of how awesome God is and holy He is and how fearful He is. And we see that in Hebrews 10 verse 31, it says, It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[2 : 29] It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Now, of course, as believers, as God's people, born again Christians, we know His hands are under us and over us.

We're in His hand. He's holding us in His hand. He's underneath of the everlasting arms. There's no fear for us in His hands, in His arms. But we know for a lost one, when they fall into His hands, when death comes and they're not ready, then it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

If you're not prepared, if you don't know Him, there's something fearful. And, friends, today we're witnessing a trend in Christianity to a form of Christianity that, at times, it's very casual.

It's too casual with the things of God, with the holy things. It's too comfortable, dare I say, even flippant. It's flippant with the Word of God, with Christianity, with worship, with truth, with salvation. It's treated very carelessly and flippantly, too carelessly, the things of God. And if you'd like to turn to 1 Chronicles 13, we'll see a story and account here of an instance of this, of the holy things, of being treated carelessly, too lightly, too heedlessly.

[3 : 57] In 1 Chronicles 13, the context here is of the Ark of the Covenant. It's been away from Israel. The Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant.

It was in someone's house. And David, the king, had the idea of taking the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. And in 1 Chronicles 13, 7, it says, And they carried the Ark of God in a new car out of the house of Abinadab.

And Uzzah and Ahio drove the car. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

They had the whole box and dice of all the instruments they could gather, all the musical instruments. And verse 9, And when they came onto the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put forth

his hand to hold the Ark, for the oxen stumbled.

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the Ark. And there he died before God.

[5 : 08] And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah, wherefore that place is called Perez Uzzah to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the Ark of God home to me?

Now this Ark, the Ark of the Coen, was a box about four foot long, about so high, it was a special wooden chest, overlaid with solid gold, with two golden cherubim on top.

It was meant to be in the most holy place of the tabernacle. This wooden box, this chest, held the Ten Commandments, two symbols of God's miraculous power, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded.

God's amazing workings with the children of Israel over time. And the Ark of the Covenant represented the Lord. It represented God Almighty as a symbol of His presence with His people, of His power, of His throne, because He dwelt between the cherubim, in the temple, in the tabernacle. And it represented everything that was heavenly, everything that was holy, that was sacred and special. And David had the good intention, the good idea, of wanting to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem.

[6 : 31] The Philistines had captured it, as I say, and it caused them a lot of trouble. They had a lot of curse and trouble upon them as they held this Ark of the Covenant for some time.

They suffered because of it. And so one day they tied up a cart and they put some milk cows on the cart and they let it go. And the cows amazingly brought it to the Israelites.

But now David wanted to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem where it belonged, with great fanfare. He arranged a special ceremony. He pulled out everything he could imagine to make this the greatest event, the greatest celebration.

He had a fancy new cart, a fine team of oxen. You know, I'd imagine when he would have made that Ark, he'd have probably chosen the best wood that he could have found. He would have found the greatest wheels and the design and maybe he had it intricately carved or beautifully designed. This was the best cart you could ever imagine. This was the Mercedes-Benz of the day that would carry this Ark back to the place that it belonged. What a spectacle it was as thousands of people came from everywhere.

[7 : 45] It says all of Israel here, along with David, the religious leaders, the best musicians of the day, his bravest soldiers, some 30,000 of them. It says in 2 Samuel 6, the allied account.

And two men were there, two men were given this honour, the honour of driving the car. Two men, one called Ahio. Ahio, it means friendly.

Here was a friendly guy, Mr. Friendly. Someone with a charismatic personality, an attractive person, Mr. Friendly. And then there was Uzzah. Uzzah means strength.

Here was someone who was strong and powerful. He had energy and power. These two fellows, they had a sincere effort as they drove the car. There was only one problem.

One problem. God's specific command was that the Ark be carried. Exodus 25, 12-15. By specially chosen men.

[8 : 45] Levites of the family of Koath. Numbers 4-15. These were the special ones that God had selected and nominated, chosen for that role. And they had to carry them.

They had to carry the Ark. So here was what happened. The oxen stumbled. The cart shifted. You know, this Ark, suddenly it started to tilt over. And Uzzah reached out to steady God's Ark.

God killed him. Pretty heavy stuff, isn't it? It's an amazing account. As we explore it together. David. David had motivation. King David, he had great enthusiasm. He meant well. He meant well. There's lots of well-meaning religious people in Australia today.

In the world. He meant well. His heart was in the right place, you could say. All the people. All the people were there. Everybody was there. Everybody who was anybody.

[9 : 43] Everybody was there. And they were having a wow of a time. And they were praising. They were praising and worshipping God. It seemed such a blessed time. It seemed such a wonderful time of worship.

But David was very careless because he was not obeying God's instructions. Uzzah too. Uzzah had all the right intentions.

It seemed... He seemed that he was doing what would have been the right thing to do in many ways. It seemed innocent enough. It seemed innocent enough. And he seemed a man who did what his emotions told him to do.

He was doing what seemed helpful. Driving the car. It seemed a useful thing. And even in honour of the ark to stop it falling off the car. He protected it from falling in his own strength exactly.

He did not do the right thing. That was the problem. He did not do what was right. And it cost him his life. God had given Israel the exact dimensions of this ark, this box, this chest.

[10:48] The exact dimensions, the specific instruction about how they were to transport it. The ark had some rings on the side of it and poles to run through the rings.

And these special poles were a certain length, a certain type of work. They were to be carried only on the shoulders of the Levites. There was no other way that it was to be transported.

The ark, it represented God's holiness. It represented God's presence. It was never to be touched. What does this all mean?

What can we learn? We know in the Word of God, Romans 15, 4, it says, That whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

This has been written for our learning. We can learn from this. We can learn from David, from Uzzah. We can learn from what happened. David knew what God had commanded. He knew it.

[11:46] He knew the book. He knew God's instructions. It was all laid out. Quite crystal clear. But he chose to ignore it. He chose to disregard it. And David's carelessness resulted in a man needlessly dying.

Now friends today, people can be very sincere. Very sincere in their efforts. I know sometimes I've referred to this before where you might see what looks like a bottle of lemonade.

It's got some, looks like lime cordial in it or lime lemonade, but really it's battery acid. And it's labelled lemonade. Someone might sincerely take that bottle and go, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub, blub.

Blub, blub. That's not lemonade. You know, they were sincere, but they were sincerely wrong.

Friends, there's many sincerely wrong in churchy amity today. They're missing the point. They're missing the boat.

They're not getting the real message of salvation, of eternal life. And they're disregarding much of the Word of God in the process.

[12:48] And David knew what he should do, but he ignored it. He disregarded it. And people can be sincerely wrong. But friends, God's demanding our obedience. Numbers 4.15, it says, you know, in black and white here, they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die.

Those are disregarded God's commandments. You know, it's like some people today, oh, they cut bits and pieces out. They choose smorgasbord style, what kind of commands of God they obey, or what they choose to believe.

Friends, we've got to take it as read. It was a disregarded God's command as if it didn't matter, as if it didn't matter what God had said. About what God had said, about who was to move the ark, about how it was to be moved.

He did what seemed right to him. As a son, it talks about the people did what was right in their own eyes. And really, it had been better if Uzzah, in the circumstances, had let the ark just fall and touch the earth instead of his sinful hands.

Here was David, thousands of people, glorious music, celebration of the ark's return to Jerusalem. It would have been better though, had he just quietly followed the instructions and done it right.

[14:10] Done it right. We must also do the right thing. Do the right thing. Not what might feel right, or what might seem right, or what we might think is right.

And I can be guilty of this. In our own invention and design, doing things that is not really pleasing to God. And we can all take stock and think, is that right?

Is it the right thing? The right thing. Righteousness is really, it's the right thing, isn't it? It's doing right. It's being right. Not of our own strength and work, but because of his grace, and his outworking of that grace in our lives.

So, no one should touch the ark. No one should touch the ark. Yet, Uzzah touched it and God's anger was kindled and he dropped dead. How do we treat holy things? How do you treat them?

The holy things of God. Do we treat the Word of God carelessly? I know in some countries, my Dad was telling me how, in Africa, when the preacher is there, there's some servant comes up, what, with their head bowed, as they deliver the Bible, the Word of God to the preacher.

[15 : 19] They treat it so reverently, so carefully, so precious is the Word. It's so precious, it's so wonderful. I know, and yet for some, they just throw the Bible on the ground. You know, that would be a lack of courtesy in many countries.

Or, you know, just treat it with disdain, with disregard. We should revere the Word of God, the Holy Word of God, the Holy Bible. Is God someone just up in the sky?

Some man upstairs? Some Christians refer to God like that. Is Jesus just your old buddy, your old pal? Or is He Lord?

Is He Lord? And not just lip service Lord. This passage speaks to us about the presence of God, the holiness of God, the worship, the reverent worship of God.

God is holy, holy, holy. And it's a fearful thing, fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God.

[16 : 21] As Uzzah found out, do you stand in awe of His holiness? Are you like Moses as he took his sandals off at the burning bush?

The presence of God. He ascends the hallowedness of His name. Hallowed, holy, regarded holy, treated as sanctified, as holy, as esteem, as reverence.

Jesus is thy name. Hallowed, be thy name. Do we treat His name as holy? Or is He just Jesus? Is He just Jesus to you? You know, sometimes you hear Christians praying and they say, Jesus, Jesus, but He's Lord Jesus.

Lord Jesus. He's precious. His name is precious. Let's treat it as holy. Hallowed, be your name. What is His name? It means strength. He was a powerful man.

A man of power for the hour. But He did it in His own strength. In His own strength. With the strength of His flesh. With the strength of His own arm.

[17 : 26] It was not of God. We can all make that mistake. Proverbs and sisters, as any of us do, anything for God. Whether it's ministry. Whether it's serving. Whether it's witnessing. Whether it's... Whatever we do.

We can be fleshly. Even about the work of God. About His service. And we need to be guarded about that. When Uzzah reached out to the ark.

It represented how we can sometimes use our own strength. And act in our own power. In our own ego. God was specific about what should be done. Yet they disregarded the Word of God.

Friends, today there's a famine of hearing the Word. There's a famine of people not obeying, not heeding, not regarding. Disregarding the Word of God. A preacher called Tozer said this.

He said, Many of our popular songs and choruses in praise of Christ are hollow and unconvincing. Some are even shocking in their amorous endearments and strike a reverent soul as being a kind of flattery.

[18 : 28] Offer to one with whom neither composer nor singer is acquainted. The whole thing is in the mood of a love ditty. The only difference being the substitution of the name of Christ for that of the earthly lover.

How different and how utterly wonderful are the emotions aroused by a true spirit incited love for Christ. Such love may rise to a degree of adoration almost beyond the power of the heart to endure. Yet at the same time it will be serious, elevated, chaste and reverent. Christ can never be known without a sense of awe and fear accompanying the knowledge.

He is the fairest among ten thousand, but also the Lord, high and mighty. He is the friend of sinners, but also the terror of devils.

The friend of sinners, but also the terror of devils. He is meek and lowly in heart, but he is also the Lord and Christ who will surely come to be the judge of all men.

[19 : 31] No one who knows him intimately can ever be flippant in his presence. If Bible Christianity is to survive the present world upheaval, we shall need to recapture the spirit of worship.

The spirit of worship, that awe, that reverence, that fear of God. Friends, God is worshipped only when His word is obeyed. There are many well-meaning ones who are disregarding the word and there is all manner of celebration and activity.

But yet, if the word is neglected, if salvation is neglected, if the souls of men and women and this precious soul-saving message is neglected, then it is all in vain.

as heard these things. Great fear came upon all the church, and as many as heard these things. It's a fearful thing. It's a fearful thing to get it wrong. Do the right thing. Do the right. Carelessness to me. Likewise treat the things of God lightly, carelessly. Do we treat it as trivial? Do we give token heed, token attention? Do we just disregard, hold swags of Scripture, just take it or leave it? Just take a piecemeal approach, a smorgasbord approach? Lightness, levity, flippancy. You know, there's a place for a degree of humour, a degree of fun and enjoyment. Entertainment, perhaps to a degree, but the trouble is, the focus has shifted completely in the wrong direction. Brothers and sisters, we're not here to be entertained. We're here to be edified.

[26 : 45] We're here to be blessed. We're here to be lifted, to be stirred, to be urged, to be encouraged, to be provoked, to be angered, to be cut to the heart, to be made uncomfortable where God wants us to be, that He would be honoured and glorified, that He would be lifted up, that we would leave this place weeping and trembling and fearful if may be, but right with God, right with Him, that we would do what is right, that He would do that which is right.

And see, souls won. You might leave church feeling worse than you came. We used to sing a song, you won't leave here like you came, in Jesus' name. Well, you know, sometimes we've got to leave the place feeling, wow, he really socked it to me today. Wow, the Word of God, they hit me hard this morning. Oh, oh, I need to get right with God. You know, I'm sure when the revivalists and reformers of all were preaching the Word of God, and people were trembling on their feet, and deploring their faces, and deploring their sinful state, and in total and utter abandon and pleading for mercy and grace and repentance, that it wasn't entertainment then, brother. It wasn't entertainment then, sister. It was the Word of God, hard and strong and sure and true, provoking and touching each one.

When a person is freezing to death. Freezing to death. Freezing to death. Imagine yourself out on the Arctic wastelands. Nobody around you, you're there, been there for hours.

When a person is freezing to death, who feels a pleasant numbness, that he does not want to end. This is what they tell you, you start to just get cold and oh, it feels almost good. You feel numb. You feel numb. He just goes to sleep as he is freezing to death. But when heat is applied, and the blood begins rushing into the affected areas, pain immediately occurs.

[28 : 55] As they try to warm up that body that's been almost frozen to numbness, to death, to death's gore, the pain is indicative of rescue and of cure.

And you could see that, in a sense too, God sends a prophet to people who are cold in their relationship with God.

God sends the word to his messenger, to people who are spiritually freezing to death, they don't even realise it. You know, they almost stop shivering, they're just numb. They're just almost frozen. As they start to die, frozen to death. They want to stay that way, it's comfortable. It's almost pleasant.

A pleasant numbness. And the prophet turns the heat on. The word of God is like a blow torch. It starts to heat us up. It starts to warm us up.

[29 : 52] To make us uncomfortable. The heat gets turned on. And sometimes people can get angry with the messenger. Angry with him when he's actually working to make them better.

He is often accused of causing their pain. But yet, it must be. Friends, whoever is speaking, preaching, sharing, sometimes they'll provoke. They'll stir.

They'll touch a nerve. It often happens. People get a nerve touch. Ouch! Oh, I'm not going there again. He's a bit too, he gets a bit too personal. He gets a bit too, he's touched my sacred cow. He's having a go at me again. Oh, I've got to take my Bible and get right out of there. You know, some people like that. Puh!

Don't dare to say something that's going to make them, puh! That's getting a bit, that's something I don't want to hear. Maybe God wants you to hear it. I pray so. I don't just want to be saying that because it's what I say and what I think and believe.

[30 : 55] But that is the Word. The Word will do the work. It's alive, it's active, it's sharp, it's quick, it's powerful. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. And sometimes that sharpness is what we need.

Basically, if we need some of those experiences. Basically, if we need some of those experiences. Basically, if we need some of those experiences. Basically, if we need some of those experiences. Basically, if we need some of those experiences.

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